

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.

### Workharder

Our young generation is not motivated to work and the students are doing almost nothing significant to improve the socio-economic conditions and thereby themselves. We are not working hard and I think we need to boost up our nation and young generations as much as possible and as soon as possible. Especially, the university students have a greater responsibility, but what are they doing now? A good number of them -- both male and female -- are passing their time gossiping [addabaji].

So please think about it and let's motivate them and encourage them to work more. Otherwise, we cannot have any future here. The electronic and print media, the politicians and the teachers, should put some extra effort for students' cause. We have the potential to do something great step by step, but if we don't work hard, then the hope will fade out soon.

A Lecturer, Dhaka University

### Who is sleeping?

This is in response to Mr. Arshad Ali's letter. He claims that our defence department is sleeping. Why are you blaming the defence? Don't you know if defence wants to do anything it has to take green signal from the cabinet and, by the way, I don't want to mention how slow our cabinet members are? For example, the Navy can send five or six more ships or the Army can send more relief operators but will our cabinet give the green signal?

Some people are always looking for chances to blame the defence department just for nothing. Please don't blame the defence, blame the government.

Tawfik Zunayed  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### Fishy lake!

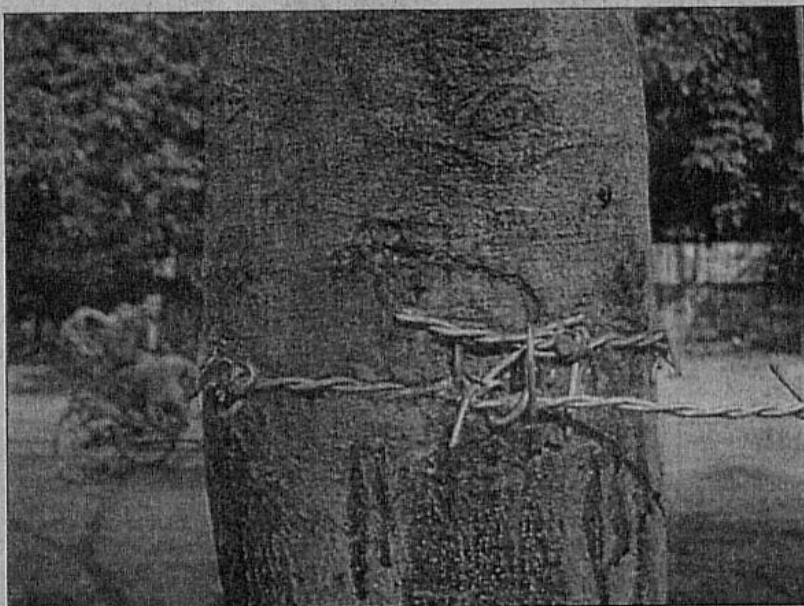
Sorry to break Dr Richard Murphy's (Re: Good News! 3.1.2005) heart, but I believe there is fish in the Gulshan-Baridhara Lake. I read the article in Star City too, but contrary to experts' claim, I saw fish in that water. Well, I won't say that my claim is up-to-date, but there was fish in that lake last October. And I believe I'd have noticed if they all died in the last three months.

However, Dr. Murphy should rest assured that most of the fish available in Dhaka's markets are caught from the rivers. So, they're not from as stinky water as you might suspect. So, enjoy the fish!

Himu, Dhaka

### Thoughts on Rab

Could someone please explain the



## Poor trees!

Does anybody care for the trees that line the middle of Satmasjid Road? I guess not.

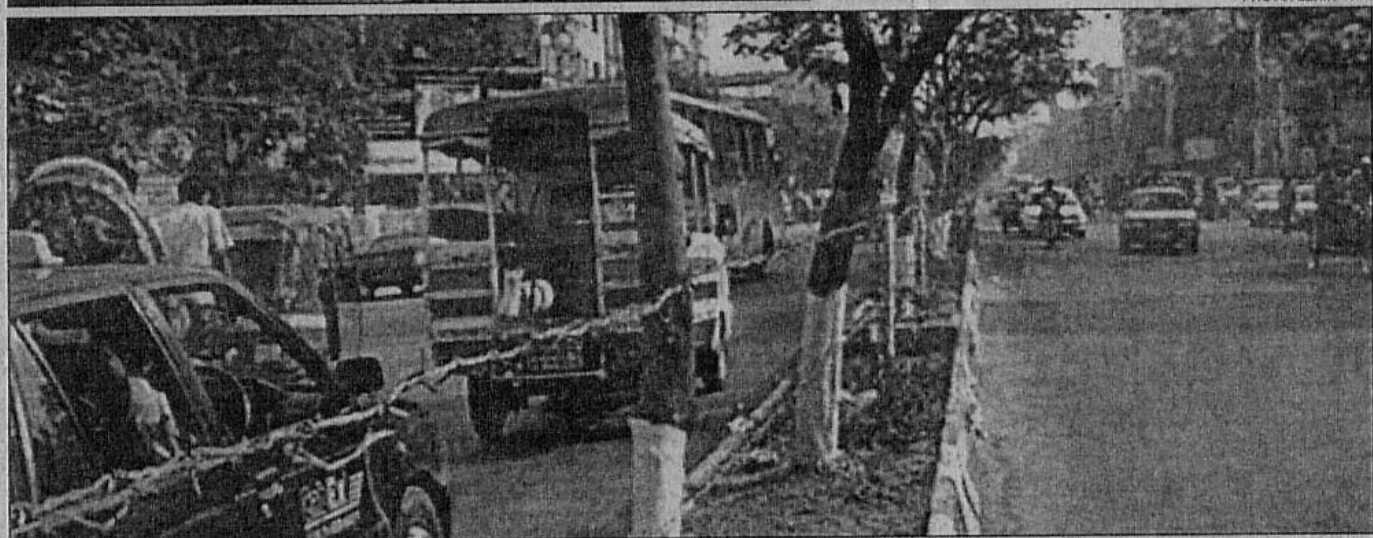
In the name of beautification for the SAARC Summit all over the city, it seems those poor trees have been sacrificed with the majority being wrapped in barbed-wire fencing. It is downright shameful and insensitive of the persons carrying out the work.

While a tree takes years to reach full height, but within a matter of days it is as good as dead after steel nails have been driven into its heart.

Can somebody explain why this is happening?

Lenin Gani  
on e-mail

PHOTO: LENIN GANI



difference between BNP's creation, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), and Sheikh Mujib's creation, the Jatiya Rakshi Bahini (JRB)?

It seems to me that both have the same job specifications.

Abdul M Islam, UK

### ACC vs. bureaucracy

The continuing controversies surrounding the newly formed Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) gives an impression to even a novice mind that certain quarters are very active to make the commission inactive. First of all, the commission's former shell i.e. BAC never succeeded in instituting a single case of corruption. The political leadership as well as the bureaucracy were both happy to keep it that way.

Now with the independence of ACC, the political and bureaucratic

establishments are not willing to let its power be undermined and hence the formation of the commission has been on weaker terms of references keeping it dependent on the same bureaucracy. What more, the very first move in the commission's attempt to investigate the missing vehicles which the higher echelons in our administration take for granted until their retirement, is being thwarted in its infancy. The message is simple -- the commission dare not take its objective to fight corruption in government literally and seriously.

The ACC is already a mess without the right terms of reference and may well embrace the same fate as BAC did. If the commission fails to exercise its authority at the very outset, regardless of consequences, I do not know whether our lawmakers or legal minds ever keep track of

similar developments in other countries. The first of such commission was set up in Australia in the early 90s and this ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) did not spare the rich and the powerful in its investigation of corruption. Hong Kong later copied the system to fight corruption in the country. Our lawmakers should have studied the same before introducing the ACC.

The average citizen in the country saw a ray of hope with the recent crime busting by Rab and if ACC could do the same in fighting corruption, we could live a little more peaceful life. But will the so called civil society and the establishment allow us, the hard working majority, that freedom, instead of taking satisfaction in mere publication of reports or interfering in the welcome efforts of Rab or ACC?

Khandaker R Zaman, On e-mail

supplier. Desa was established on 1st October 1991. Since then it is doing nothing except suffering losses. Before Desa was set up, the Power Development Board suffered a systems loss of 45%, which in the year 2000 was 26%. Systems loss is the loss of power due to illegal actions of people. The illegal connections taken through out the city deprives Desa and the government of revenue earning. Another kind of loss is technical loss, which is due to system limitations or it may be due to lack of modern facilities to distribute power. These are the two losses Desa is facing. To young citizens like us, 'systems loss' and 'Desa' have become synonymous.

Every year a large portion of public money is spent on Desa to cover up the losses. Load shedding in our homes and other places also points to the inefficiency of Desa.

Ali Asghar, Purana Paltan, Dhaka

### Buyers, beware

The concept of customer satisfaction is still elusive in Dhaka judging from my experience in a hardware store in Gulshan.

On Dec 23, I took back a soldering iron that I had purchased on Dec 20. This soldering iron worked as advertised on the first day only. But failed to operate on the second day. I tried numerous times (Different plug points) unsuccessfully, before going to return it to the store and exchange it with another one.

The clerk at the store, listened to my reasons of returning and then responded saying "Sorry bhai, this is an electronic item and there is nothing he could do" as I tried to protest, the clerk's supervisor joined the discussion. The supervisor looked at the item and remarked "Well it did work over the first day, did it not?" While trying to keep calm, I told him that I was not aware of the fact that this was a single use item and in that case the package

should have been labelled as such. There was no response to my comment. The supervisor then said that he could have taken it if only I had not opened the package.

So, is it my fault that I expect something that I deserve, at least something that I have paid for?

A sufferer, Dhaka

### Imitating the West

As a nation, we the Bengalees, are very much fond of fun and amusement. We love to enjoy the precious moments of our lives with great enthusiasm. And it does not matter to us what we are celebrating and why. We just love to be entertained. We love to have pure entertainment. I'm one of the populace and I also love to enjoy the joyful events such as the 31st night. I love to enjoy and at the same time I remain alert so that my efforts of entertainment don't hurt or disturb others. The 31st night is a special occasion because when the clock hands strike 12, a year ends and at the same time a New Year arrives in our life with more surprise, more events and more incidents. However, on the 31st eve, many of us intentionally or unintentionally start imitating the West and become unbridled! Their attitude says that eventually they forget where they live in. Instead of having real pleasure, some are over interested in showing flaunt aristocracy and vulgarity. Our pride will no longer exist if we blindly follow others and fail to differentiate between good and bad, right and wrong!

What has happened to our national pride? Should we let our promises to be empty?

Cantara Wali Ruhi, JU

### About Rab

This is in response to a letter published in The Daily Star on December 16, 2004. I agree with Mr. Firoz Mannan that "Where there is just one policeman for every 10,000 people and law is almost useless, the government should find an alternative solution." So the government introduced Rab (Rapid Action Battalion).

At first I was also happy that now we would be able to live a better life. Rab arrests a criminal and interrogates him. Later we hear that the criminal has been killed in "crossfire". This really raises a lot of questions. I am not saying that Rab has only demerits. In fact Rab is a mixture of both merits and demerits. Here I want to refer to Mahathir Mohamad, the former prime minister of Malaysia. He said that if the top government employees are corrupt, no one can uproot corruption from a society. So if top government employees become honest, only then we will be able to bring the criminals to justice with existing laws and uproot crime from the country. Side by side, we must increase the number of police personnel to control crime. And I think this is the only solution.

Md. Shahjahan, Comilla

### Retirement age of DU staff

Retirement age in Dhaka University is 65 years for teachers. University teachers require this upper age limit as they had engaged themselves in doing MS, M Phil, PhD etc. at the beginning of their careers. The retirement age of officers and employees, on the other hand, is 60 years which is three years more than government servants'. However, the officers and employees now demand that their retirement age be raised to 65.

I don't think the demand is based on sound logic.

A Rauf, Dhaka

## A colossal tragedy



PHOTO: AFP

We are well aware of the Tsunami victims as the Tsunami agony has become the most updated news of the world now, especially in Asia. This is the time to be beside the helpless victims. Tsunami has claimed more than 150,000 lives. The rest of the people have become completely helpless and life-threatening diseases have spread in the affected areas.

So we have to take part in the relief operations.

Rezaul Haque Sumon  
On e-mail

What a disastrous and horrendous ending of the year 2004. A colossal calamity hit almost 11 nations across some 4000 miles. Incredible indeed! It was no terrorist plot, no carpet bombing, and no nuclear explosion. The mighty power of God has shown us that HE is the only real POWER neither a state nor any other being, however strong and rich in resources they may be.

Here is a very clear lesson for us: we have not done our homework properly. We only pay lip service to our faiths. In the fury of Tsunami people belonging to all faiths have been affected -- Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists etc. It establishes the fact that we are humankind are all one.

With best prayers and wishes for a peaceful and wonderful year for all.

Syed Faiyazuddin Ahmad  
Leicester, UK

The tragic situation created by Tsunami compels us to ask, 'Why thousands and thousands of people have to die at one go and leave innumerable orphans, widows and half-dead people to fend for themselves?' No man on earth can answer that painful question.

Alexander Courage had very wisely remarked, 'The strength of religion lies not in the unquestionable answer, but in the unanswerable question'. Every man ought to know that he is bad and that God is good. But, sad to say, that tragedy of the Tsunami magnitude becomes necessary to shock the self-centred, complacent and wicked human beings to reality. The Black Sunday has taught us the hard way to be better and more caring human beings. Let us believe that God is in full control of the situation created by Tsunami. This is the right time for us to identify an area of our life we would like to change for the better, and indeed discard the beliefs that might be preventing you and me and all of us from achieving the quality of life we are seeking on earth.

Omar Luther King  
Delhi, India

Many countries have pledged aid commensurate with their abilities and available resources towards mitigating the destruction wrought by the recent Tsunami. Bangladesh should not remain a bystander in this regard and should make every effort to help our Asian neighbours in their time of need. While we may not be able to pledge cash or goods towards the relief effort, one invaluable resource that we can make available is the international experience of the soldiers and medical personnel of Bangladesh Army.

From Afghanistan to Somalia, the Bangladesh Army has been the single largest source of army personnel for UN peace-keeping efforts. With this impressive resume, the Bangladesh Army is aptly suited for providing relief, reconstruction and medical help desperately needed in the countries affected by the recent Tsunami. The diverse international experience of our peacekeepers will be invaluable and will expedite the recovery of the affected people.

Shomit Chowdhury  
Dhamondi, Dhaka

## A captive nation

Having witnessed the partition of British India as an adult; and subsequently the break-up of Pakistan in 1971, the thoughts of a Bangladeshi citizen (with such a background) on 16th December 2004 is not at all inspiring. I went to the bazaar, and the loudspeakers were on in full blast, with the usual blah blah.

Our leaders (and hence the followers) are terrible noise-makers, mixed with a lot of sentimental outpourings. Good for adda sessions (khaanti Bengalee), but not for practical field work, and to push the nation forward. Our leaders are completely different from our hard-working chasi-bhais (and their family members). The upper levels of the society have forgotten how to earn their living from the sweat of their brows (it is immaterial whether the brain or the brawn is involved). Short-cuts and temptation have made the nation spirit moth-eaten.

There is no hope for this young nation, unless the whole lot of the current political culture is uprooted and revitalised completely. It means facing huge systems losses to start afresh. That is the lesson of history, and a by-product of moral indiscretions. Whom to charge-sheet? What has happened to moral courage?

Bad leaders come and go, leaving behind garbage and suffering. The cumulative effect is simple to conjecture: with the rich natural resources at our disposal, we could have easily, by this time, taken off economically with a growth rate above seven per cent. Which Saarc member has taken off? We have to analyse the common denominator. The Raj genetic code is still haunting us?

But the poor and incompetent leadership is not willing to suffer on principle. You can't take without giving. If the input is, say, 100, then the good and useful system output is

around ten per cent (the rest is lost in processing and reprocessing at different stages). The current society believes in the opposite maxim, thanks to the additive philosophy of our so-called leaders, who cannot control their followers (allowing unauthorised commissions for dubious omissions). Toll collection (in various forms) has been accepted, politically, as a philosophy of life. There is no room for alibi.

One generation is gone, and the new generation is getting restless. It is a disturbing period of transition for the political culture. We are faced with a shortage of roots, and an abundance of artificial branches and leaves. This stance raises the centre of gravity, causing unstable situations. Keep low, and add to the background, not the foreground.

Our standard of cricket is similar to our politics. It cannot improve unless our political cricket culture improves. The politicians are not playing cricket, and they know it. It is filter-down culture, handed down traditionally, since the first human civilisation evolved on this Earth. Bangladesh is a victim of bad precedents and unholy, unethical, immoral practices in private and public life. First the discipline of the self, before offering selfless service to the masses. The risk-venture level in politics is poor, due to the insecurity syndrome of the entrenched, and upcoming future leaders.

There are four main areas to look for: batting, bowling, fielding, and umpiring. Our political umpiring level is not improving even with the introduction of the artificial neutral caretaker government concept. Political batting is more than the use of native lathi and danda. Brickbat practice does not improve the quality of bowling on the international cricket pitches.

Md Abad  
Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

### Climate change

In his article, 'The price we pay for the crimes of the rich' (December 29, 2004), Mohammad Mozahidur Rahman states, 'A survey indicated that only 17 percent of the members of the American Meteorological Society and the American Geophysical Society (actually, Union) thought the warming of the 20th century was the result of an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.' This statement seriously misstates the facts. Mr. Rahman has borrowed this canard from the op-ed articles of climate change sceptics, who in turn have copied it from one another with no attempt at verification. What are the errors?

The survey at the base of the statement is not current. It was conducted in 1991, when the science of climate change was far less developed than it is now.

Even then, the 19 percent (not 17) of respondents were referring to a question on the past 100 years. They said that temperatures had risen 1881-1991 and that humans were responsible for it.

When asked whether human-induced climate change was now occurring (in 1991), 66 percent of the scientists said yes. Since then the evidence supporting this view has steadily increased.

The actual position of the American Geophysical Union, an international society of 42,000 members, including several in Bangladesh, is that 'Human activities are increasingly altering the Earth's climate. These effects add to natural influences that have been present over Earth's history. Scientific evidence strongly indicates that natural influences cannot explain the rapid increase in global near-surface temperatures observed during the second half of the 20th century. Human impacts on the climate system include increasing concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gases (e.g., carbon dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons and their substitutes, methane, nitrous oxide, etc.), air pollution, increasing concentrations of airborne particles, and land alteration. A particular concern is that atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide may be rising faster than at any time in Earth's history, except possibly following rare events like impacts from large extraterrestrial objects.'

Readers who would like to see the full text of the statement excerpted above will find it at [http://www.agu.org/sci\\_soc/policy/positions/climate\\_change.shtml](http://www.agu.org/sci_soc/policy/positions/climate_change.shtml)

Harvey Lefert  
Public Information Manager, American Geophysical Union, US

### Desa

Desa is our capital's only electricity

## Western or Eastern?

I am delighted to read the 'worried teenager's' 'Western Influence' letter in your column (DS 3 Jan.) which encourages me to let all your readers know that even at the advent of the heterogeneous culture of the 21st century, there are yet left some children who treasure family values of the past and abhor the onslaught of the alien culture! To stop moral degeneration and degradation of our values and save the youngsters from derailment we must stop the infiltration and invasion (of satellite channels) by pornographic films, tantalising hot-pant shows and undesirable obscene vivid acts of plays (which are being shown even in the evening instead of dead of night). Some channels, I understand from friends, show films early in the morning with all vivid actions, to the detriment of young minds.

The unruly behaviour in society, as observed by my young teenaged friend, is solely due to unethical films and obscene shows as shown very often on the TV from across the border. Amazingly, our own present-day culture is polluting our serene eastern culture and ruining our age-old traditions. I must assert that the 'young generation' cannot choose as the writer wanted them to, as they are not capable of differentiating between good and bad and here the seniors have a definitive role to play to guide the young ones. The government machinery has the strongest and decisive part to play. It must formulate laws to regulate the screening of films for public view.

The part-picture as displayed with bikini is the popular one at the beaches, there is nothing wrong in it. But if it comes to the stage and over-run any film shows; that's not acceptable. And definitely picturisation of pillow plays or compromising situations tells upon civility, vanity and taste and cannot at all be acceptable. Good news surfaced the other day, never mind how much delayed, our government is perhaps drafting proposals to regulate the airing of satellite programmes.

If it's really happening, I must congratulate the authorities.

AF Rahman, On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP