

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.

Tigers and elephants (white!)

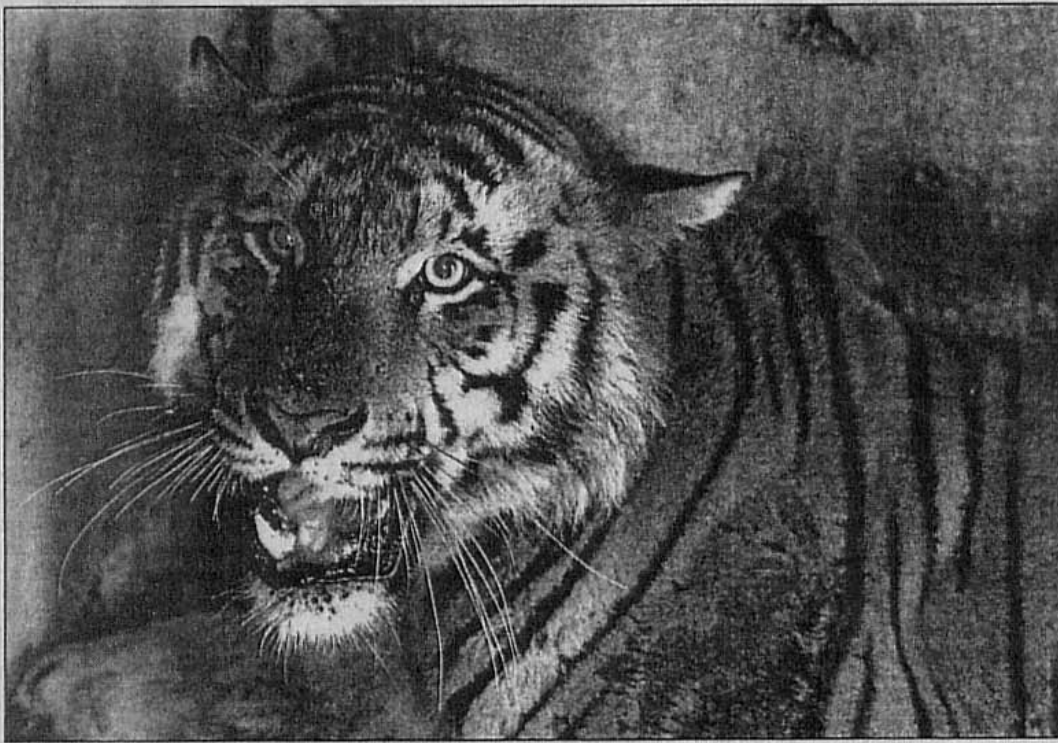
We have Royal Bengal Tigers (in the beautiful forest), the famous Bengal black goat (best meat in the world), and white elephants in some government offices and autonomous bodies. The DS report on Rajuk (Jan 6) is the type of investigative reporting needed in Bangladesh, to expose too many covered up deals. When politicians become corrupt, and black money solves all problems, it is a danger signal for the eroding society.

Rab should explain the use of the term 'crossfire': only the main culprit dies, and not anybody else. Now the government is considering decentralisation of the vast PWD. Biman is also under the lens for its systems losses. The file-oriented government secretariat needs a shake-up and dressing up, to get rid of the colonial mode of administration. But the regime is interested in

premature election campaigns. The weakness of the coalition government is the horde of five dozens ministers, ministering to needs more private than public.

Where are the badly-needed municipal reforms? Simply changing the name to City Corporation does not disinfect the interior environment. Rajuk's step motherly attitude is not being condemned. The new ACC has rightly started an enquiry on the missing project vehicles (have a peep at the car park at the NGO Bureau headquarters). There are many grey areas in the NGO world. Where to bury the white elephants? Nobody knows about the missing dead elephants (the legend: where elephants go to die?)

AZ
Dhaka



No change!

Every year the month of victory comes and goes reminding us of the spirit of the liberation war, then come the New Year, new resolution, evolution without solution, many dreams unfulfilled.

The number of landless people is increasing progressively owing to the ever widening gap between the rich and poor.

We have to work for a just social order.
Nasir Uddin Roney
Dept. of Anthropology, University of Chittagong

Technology and we!

They say through technology human life has become easier, faster and more secure. None bothers to doubt this fact. The issue of the relation between man and machine has become extremely intricate. Science fiction writers have gone a step ahead by envisioning a future with Humans and Machines reciprocated and sometimes machines taking over humans. Optimistic or pessimistic? Whatever we say it is certainly the triumph of technology.

Now let us go back to the evolutionary history of technology not far but just the last century. The advancement of telecommunication was accelerated through the WW-II, first destructive use of nuclear technology was in Hiroshima & Nagasaki, the GPS system was mainly invented for military purpose. A missile costs millions with which many schools can be set up to educate thousands in poor countries and what else? U-boat, tanks, planes and gun ships, etc. the use of technology has been extravagant. We started off the new Millennium with massive use of the Internet (There is more pornographic websites in the net than other types), satellite channels (more entertainment channels than educational or others). It is quite difficult to pinpoint every aspect. More money is spent on technological necessities, but my next door neighbour is starving.

"Ubiquitous and Appropriate spread and use of Technology" -- should be a core issue to be discussed. Technology is not bad -- but it should also be noted that human-kind's worst nightmare came true due to technology. Let's not forget Hiroshima or Nagasaki! How war machines have killed and still are killing millions.

Mohammed Fahim Momen
Electrical Engineer, South Goran, Dhaka

English proficiency of cricket players

I am a little late to write on the issue. I am sorry to mention that we sometimes overlook some issues that are important.

One thing I would like to mention is that our cricket players are now winning matches, and this national team shall be playing against many Test playing nations, both at home and abroad. After each of such matches, whether our team wins or loses, there will always be a chance for having the best player of the match from our side.

What I saw on the last and final day of the Test match at the MA Aziz Stadium was poor English from the Man of the Match. He could not tell what he wanted to! Even the captain of the team could not tell much

when asked about the performance and the future plan for the team. The same poor performance of the captain was there on the screen after he lost the "toss" on 14 January, 2005 -- the first day of the second Test in Dhaka. I thought the players are at least fluent in English, if not in playing cricket, since they have had English-speaking coaches for the last few years.

The Pakistani players sometimes speak in their own language that is not recognisable to millions of spectators all over the world when the match is a live telecast from any stadium.

I think the players should develop the habit of speaking in English, the language understood all over the world.
Sajjad Waheed
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

A tribute to my father

My father left this world forever (may Allah rest his soul in peace) on December 26, 2004 in a city hospital. He died so peacefully without making any fuss, even my sister and I, who were standing very near his bed talking to the doctor, could not realise that he had left us. It was a matter of seconds. It was typical of my father. He never gave anybody any trouble, never liked to bother, never did he beat any of his children or anybody for any reason whatsoever. There were no slang words in his dictionary. He was a father-caring, loving and dedicated to his children and wife. He was not rich in material terms but very rich in qualities--honest, soft-hearted, religious, gentle and what not? To us he was an angel, who brought us up in his warm shawl in winter mornings and 'Tal Pakhan' in his hand fanning in hot summer nights. Twice a day he used to go to mosque for prayers with a stick in his hand. His self-confidence would not allow anybody to accompany him.

What other tributes I can offer to my great father than to say that anybody in this world would have been proud to have an exemplary "Father" like him who tried to teach his children to be nice to everybody.
Munira Khan
Green Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Hiding good news?

The small news was published on page 11 of DS on 15 January, 2005.

The news was about sending Tsunami relief to Indonesia and Sri Lanka under a WFP initiative to feed and save people in those areas, hit by the worst disaster of the last year. WFP is using a US cargo aircraft to dispatch seven hundred tonnes of high-nutrition biscuits, made in Bangladesh.

The news reads, "Bangladesh was chosen as the source of the biscuits as it has the largest school feeding programme in the world." Interestingly this was the observation of the WFP and the local representative of that organisation made this comment.

The most important thing that he mentioned was that Bangladesh is "best capable of producing such a quantity of biscuits in an emergency situation." The large quantity is the amount that the WFP shall take from Bangladesh for the Tsunami relief operations.

Bangladesh is always portrayed as a poor nation in the South Asian region which is under water all the year round, and poverty is so worse that the people in the country die of

hunger.

This incident shows that this type of image is no longer there, and Bangladesh is now capable of helping others in their bad times as well. Some countries also think that disaster management in Bangladesh is also good.

I do not know for which good reason the newspapers in Bangladesh are very keen to paint a bad image of Bangladesh when we are doing relatively better than others in many areas.

Bangladesh's role in Tsunami relief efforts is very praiseworthy and should be highlighted in the press adequately.
Jhorna Ayesha Nizam
Taherpore House, Suphoni Ghat, Sylhet

Beautification of Dhaka!

The beautification of Dhaka as conceived by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is simply a cosmetic work to deceive and divert public attention from mismanagement and mess that they have created in the city. Whereas DCC's main thrust should be on operation and maintenance of the city amenities and infrastructures (conservancy, water supply & sewerage, roads and walkways etc), it is observed that they are engaged as a matter of routine in defacing the city, particularly by encroaching upon all available open land. The cosmetic hodgepodge, as seen along the Airport Road in the

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Better democracy

We have crossed 33 years of our independence! Democracy is maturing and slowly gaining ground in our country. At present people at large want peace, security and development. Human qualities like 'patience and tolerance' must be cultivated by our political, social, economic and religious leaders for the overall progress and prosperity of the nation. No matter whether the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) remains in session or prorogued, the countrymen desire completion of the five-year term of the government. We will see 'better democracy' in the days ahead when all the major political parties will field reputed, honest and qualified candidates in the general elections for the legislative branch of the government.

The responsible role of any elected 'qualified government' would call for independence of the judicial branch of the government and consequently the executive branch, comprising the civil officials, could perform their duties as per the hopes and aspirations of the citizens.

Golam Ashraf
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

80's (arched screens, walls, festoons etc), or as conceived recently by the DCC in the same road and for DU campus zone, is never sustainable.

It is funny to see the costly face lifting work along different roads requiring high maintenance cost and building of retail outlets in all available vacant lands along the inner city. For example, there is total encroachment on the newly built footpath in front of TSC, Bangabazar wholesale market, shops in Nikkhet or along Nilkhet-Katabon road etc.

Well thought-out development works, smooth operation and proper maintenance of the city amenities and infrastructure will automatically result in a beautiful city. Superficial decors, unplanned signs and symbols etc. add to the blight of the city.

ZIslam
Monipuripara, Dhaka

Those people....

Some people said, "Bangladesh will never win against Pakistan."

Bangladesh won!
Some people said, "Bangladesh will never win against India."

Bangladesh won!
Seems some peoples' heads are always in the cloud!

Some people questioned the credibility of Bangladesh's victory against Pakistan on 31 May, 1999. They said, "Pakistani players must have taken bribe, otherwise Bangladesh could never win!"

Some were born to be deceivers, who knows whom they deceive!
Once again, hats off to the Tiger!
Cantara Wali Ruhil
JU

Dubious lottery?

It seems the results of the lotteries that are held from time to time are not convincing. There are allegations that the organisers are not always honest and transparent. I am wondering if there is any authority or machinery to watch this kind of lotteries and check on possible fraud, which may have been going on unabated behind the screen and beyond the knowledge of the poor public. This is going on in the name of fund raising for some noble cause or benevolent venture.

I appeal to the department concerned to kindly intervene and put in force the rules to regulate any national lottery in the future and order investigation into the ones facing charges of fraud.

I just don't know as to how the government would convince the public who have contributed their hard earned money for a noble cause.

AF Rahman
One-mail

Future of RMG sector

We are well informed that the MFA quota system was phased out on Jan 1, 2005. This has become a threat to our RMG sector as well as its export. Because, after the phase-out Bangladesh has lost its quota facility. China and India are now in the dominant position in RMG exports. All countries have now access to the 'Open Entry' competition. So, we have to compete with all. This is the time to take proper steps to avoid all the risks and perils. For this, investment appraisal--domestic as well as foreign--is very necessary in the sector. We have to make both backward and forward linkages. Lead time should be reduced, quality of products have to improve. The quick supply methodology should be introduced along with quick shipment.

If we can do all these things, the phase-out will be an opportunity, not a threat.
Rezaul Haque Sumon
Department of Economics, University of Dhaka

English learning system in rural schools

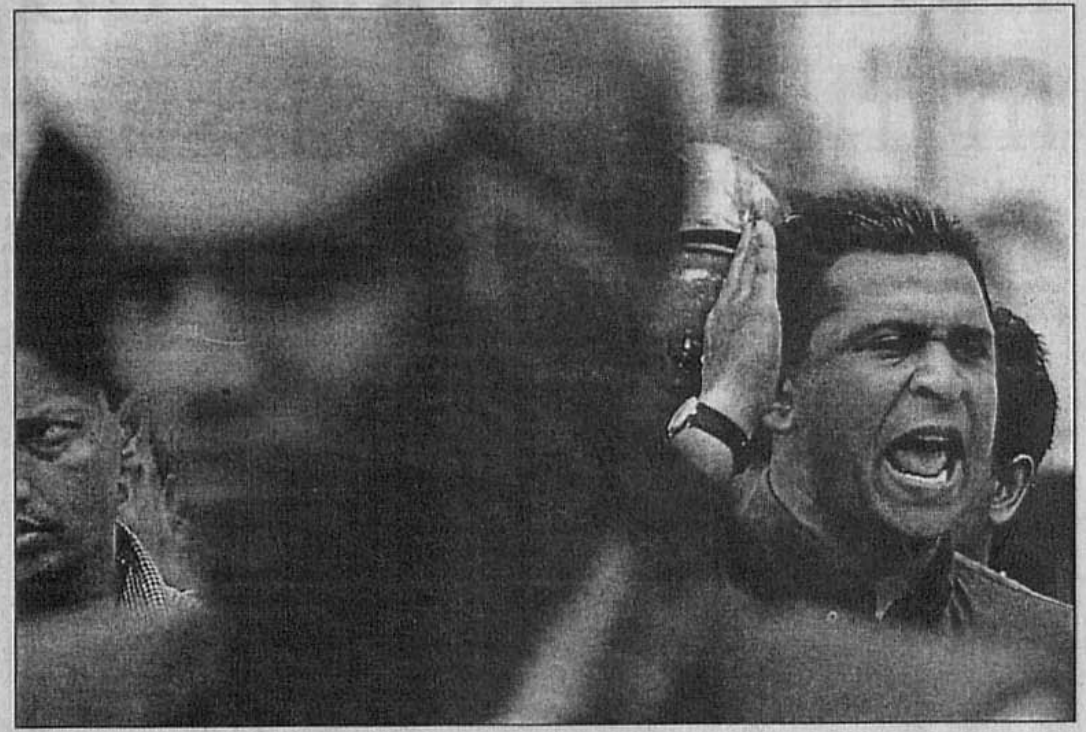
We all know that school level education is very crucial for all, because it builds a strong foundation and leads a student forward. Overall English skills of our students from rural areas are far poorer than students from urban areas and an unexpected number of students fail in public exams (SSC, HSC and others).

Recently, I got a chance to see the book of English for class X. It which inspired me to write something. At first, I would like to point out my concern about the curriculum which is developed by foreign experts using their perspectives. I appreciate it as it aims to develop the skill of listening, writing, reading and speaking of a learner as a whole, instead of memorising. It is based on fully English language systems like IELTS. Most of the chapters deal with dialogue, pair system and participatory method. But did they think about our available resources

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before introducing it, especially in rural schools?

The new curriculum needs an audio-visual system and interesting methods and demonstration to serve its purpose. On the other hand, teachers are not yet oriented on the new curriculum.

The budget allocated for education for the year 2004-2005 shows the highest amount like the past several years. But thoughtless introduction of any system will not serve our purpose.
Binu
Mohakhali, Dhaka

Small pleasure of life

Reading the morning newspaper (with a cup of tea alongside) is no longer the traditional small pleasure of life. It is informative enough, but with the wrong kinds of news and commentaries from every corner of the world.

I have just retreated after browsing through the day's headlines (in a Dhaka daily). Corrupt practices breed a lot of evil activities, at all levels of the society. The list makes unpleasant reading (abridged here for lack of space).

The recent fire in a garments (knitwear) factory in Narayanganj is alleged to be masterminded by the owners, who owe Taka one and a half crore in unpaid salaries of the workers. Besides, they would get insurance money from the evil mishap. The CNG filling station are coming up fast (plus useless fare meters), but the equipment imported are cheap and unreliable, and the service staff are unskilled and untrained (no news about training and monitoring).

The majority of the RMG factories are not properly equipped with fire-fighting and safety measures for emergency situations (locked gates, poor monitoring, no regular drills). The majority of the BTB card telephone booths are not working, due to negligent maintenance and non-availability of spares for the old equipment imported, and corrupt practices by the private telephone booths.

The civil service has broken down, Rab may be used to evict illegal usurpers of lands and properties (starting with metro Dhaka). The Income Tax department is traditionally loyal to their dishonest manoeuvres. Needless medical diagnostic tests have become hot business, and such testing centres are as popular as the numerous

coaching centres for students (the teachers are engaged in double sources of earning extra money). The official pay scales cannot keep pace with the modern needs of materialistic life.

Many NGOs and registered medical centres do not affix Tk revenue stamp to money receipts, for the government to have some income from a traditional source of revenue. In Rajuk, the visitors suffer as the staff can never find the relevant files for quick one-stop-service. The DCC is always looking for useless civil construction projects to keep the hangers on happy. The tender procedure is no longer tender, safe and soft.

The public is getting violence-prone. The DU campus area is not safe, as 'educated' muggers lurk around for some daily pocket money. Politics (a public service) is now violence-prone, and is controlled by hired musclemen, as it is a big and constant source of easy earning. The educational sector is riddled with graft and unfair means. Only cowards are neutral, in the public service sector!

The regime is busy with the next general election many, many months away. Religious intolerance is now a global issue, and sucking away the wealth of the rich nations. Terrorism is an evil offspring of the manipulations of hard-crested leaders. Life today is fragmented and synthetic--digital bickering does not believe in smooth analogue output.

When the roots are artificial, why bother about the roots and branches?
Alif Zabr
Dhaka

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Withdraw ban on rickshaw

I strongly support the comment in the feature article on the editorial page of The Daily Star appearing on December 28, criticising the unfair and undemocratic restrictions (initiated by the vested rich groups) on the movement of cycle pedal rickshaws in metropol Dhaka, which are used by the majority of the 12 million residents. Some clear and firm actions would immediately reduce the traffic congestion on the roads:

i) Prosecute the unlicensed drivers, and vehicles, motorised, and non-motorised, (more than 50 per cent each, as estimated). The roads would be clear in a week.

Introduce transparency in the

registration and licensing sections in the relevant offices (computerisation is a quick and reliable solution). Transfer a percentage of personnel at each vertical level (entrenched kingdoms).

Issue (coded) ID cards to drivers.
ii) Fix the maximum quota of pedal rickshaws to ply in the metro area.

iii) Remove all road restrictions on movement of rickshaws. Huge buses have large footprints and are not suitable for the narrow roads in Dhaka.

The city must be made resident-friendly to the middle and lower middle class who use rickshaws and do not have private cars. At present only the car-wallas are given preferential treatment (I sold my car abroad before returning home, as I was aware of the public problems in Dhaka!).

Rickshaws are not the devil or the culprit. The administration and management are corrupt to a large extent; and we have unpractical ad hoc and long-term policies. There should be a code for management of overcrowded cities in Bangladesh; and the Do's and Don'ts should be followed strictly.

Our law enforcing agencies have no deterrent effect on the citizens. This problem is not being addressed squarely. Cheap popularity is not enough to be efficient. The city managers should be pulled up for working against public interest.
Md Abad
Dhaka

Narasimha Rao

My attention has been drawn to the death news of PV Narasimha Rao, the father of open market economy in India and a full five-year term prime minister from outside Nehru-Gandhi family. Almost every newspaper and electronic media announced his death news with great attention. They described him as the architect of liberalisation in India. Unfortunately, they did not mention anything about his 'role' in the demolition of Babri Mosque.

The centuries old Babri Mosque was razed on December 6, 1992 by some Hindu fanatics led by leaders like LK Advani, Murli Manohar and others. More than 200 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in the aftermath of the incident.

It is PV Narasimha Rao who was the prime minister of India at that time. As prime minister of a constitutionally secular country, it was his duty to ensure the security of life and sacred places of a minority community. But he failed miserably in this regard.

No matter what and how much work PV Narasimha had done for the people of India, peace-loving people around the world could not overlook his failure to handle the religious fanatics with determination.
Md Abbas Salam
University of Chittagong

Experience of a Hajji

It is said that those who go to Saudi Arab to perform Hajj are 'Guests of Allah'. I got the opportunity to perform Hajj as a non-ballotee through a package. I would like to share some of my sweet and sour experiences for future Hajjis.

The treatment by the Biman employees at ZIA was nice. They greeted all the Hajjis, carried luggage, supplied a Hajj instruction booklet and were always smiling. Didn't expect any tips. This was simply remarkable! A single dose of antibiotic capsule was given to all by the Saudi government at Jeddah Airport. This was to protect the pilgrims from infection. As a non-Arab, I found many Bangladeshis who work there as cleaners, shopkeepers and drivers to communicate with. They were everywhere in Mecca, Mina and Medina. The package programme covered visits to almost all historical places. Individual initiative was not necessary.

But the story doesn't end there. The agency chose an airlines for me. Their service was horrible! They didn't maintain any seat number. Passengers were confused. Food was served hurriedly and all lights, including the reading lights, were put off. Some Bangladeshi young people begged at Medina after each prayer. This was painful for me.
Dr. Mohsin U Ahmed
Gazipur

To banish rickshaw or not...

In my opinion, the authorities concerned should give a second thought on keeping separate lanes for the rickshaws in the city's major roads thereby allowing rickshaws to ply in Dhaka, a city which once gained popularity as the 'City of Rickshaws'.

Rickshaws are not only environment-friendly but they are providing job-opportunity to hundreds of unemployed people!

To banish rickshaw or not... That is the jigsaw to be solved!
M Zahidul Haque
Chairman, Department of Language, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

