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Dear readers,

We are going to have a new e-mail address for the Letters to the Editor page. Please send your letters to letters@thedailystar.net

Tears of joy

Our Bengal Tigers have proved that they can win a Test match. It was a historical win for us. When they got the last Zimbabwean wicket at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong, I could not check my tears. I was never crazy about cricket, I like cricket, and that's it. But I don't know why I wept, it was very amazing to me.

I congratulate the Bengal Tigers, especially Habibur Basher, Rafiq, Enamul Jr and Ashraf. The nation is proud of the cricket team.
Tamanna Tasnim Miti
Golden Street, Shamoli
Dhaka



Mobile call charge

The mobile phone of BTB will be in market by the end of February, 2005. The call charge is supposed to be Tk 2.50 per minute as has been announced recently. Bangladeshis pay the highest call charge (Tk 7) in the world, though people in the nearest country pay 0.75 rupee per minute.

The parliamentary committee on the matter has advised the private mobile companies to decrease the call charge to Tk 5 at peak hours and Tk 3 for special non-peak period. Is the proposal logical? How can the call charge differ so much (BTB Tk 2.50, others Tk 5).

Why should we pay such a high rate? People in India and other countries use mobile at a low rate. If all mobile phone companies decrease their call rate, users will be greatly relieved. There will be a flow of information. Other countries will be more interested to invest in Bangladesh. So there is an opportunity to improve matters. The competing companies should fix the call rate at Tk 2 per minute.

Would the parliamentary committee realise this truth? What do the companies think? They are to do business competing with BTB isn't it?

Md. Kamal Hossain Chowdhury
Jahangirnagar University
Savar, Dhaka-1342

Murdered teacher

Prof. Yunus, a teacher of the economics department of Rajshahi University, was killed on 24 December, 2004 by unidentified criminals. People from all walks of life were greatly shocked to hear the news. Some other teachers of RU and Julfikar Ahmed Reza, Chairman, Department of Statistics of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SAU), have received death threat. Now the question arises, what is going to happen on the campuses of our universities?

A university teacher is a highly respected person as well as an asset for the nation. Nevertheless, they are being killed. Is there no law in our country? A number of renowned educationists and journalists were killed in the past but the killers have not been brought to justice. I would like to request the law enforcers to find out the killers, nab them and bring them to book for the sake of justice in society.

Otherwise, society will soon be reduced to a lawless jungle.

Md. Rezaul Karim (Reza)
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka-1207

Rab and its activities

A lot is being said about Rab and its activities. People have come up with a host of arguments both against and in favour of the activities of Rab; and so has the print media. A section of the press is critical about the activities of Rab, while another is appreciative of its role. The main complaints against Rab are: it is violating human rights, the provisions of the existing laws and of the constitution by shooting and killing the arrested terrorists without trial and without giving them opportunity to defend themselves in the courts of law. And also that Rab is killing the criminals to save their godfathers from facing legal actions or public wrath,

because if the criminals are given the opportunity to face trial and defend themselves in courts of law, they may disclose the names of their godfathers who take share of their illegal earnings and benefit themselves in many other ways from the activities of the criminals. Some even argue that both Rab and the members of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) and Janajuddha, are doing the same thing, namely, eliminating people who are corrupt and not safe for society. They say that the government also appreciates the role of Rab for its performance saying that the people who are being arrested and killed by Rab (they say in crossfire) are listed criminals having a number of criminal cases against them. This is also the case with PBCP & Janajuddha, the people being caught and killed by them are mostly corrupt and unsafe for society.

People say Rab should get hold of the godfathers of the listed criminals or terrorists as well, and eliminate them, because unless they are arrested and put behind bars or eliminated they will again recruit criminals once Rab is withdrawn from the field. These corrupt politicians cannot do without rearing criminals and the terrorists and the terrorists and criminals also cannot carry on their activities without the protection of the godfathers.

I am inclined to support this popular argument in favour of catching the godfathers. Some may say that in the absence of evidence or criminal cases against these

godfathers, who are mostly politicians or people having both money and clout, it is difficult for Rab to arrest them. Some people have even suggested that Rab will be doing a great job for society by secretly catching and eliminating the godfathers. They say that the present efforts of Rab will not create any lasting or positive impact on the law and order situation if the godfathers are spared and left free or alive; on the other hand people will not be very unhappy to see the notorious godfathers lying dead on the streets or in the drains and jungles killed by unknown assassins.

I am sometimes tempted to subscribe to these popular views as well. Rab should either prevent the deaths of criminals in crossfire, thus giving them the opportunity to disclose the names of their godfathers, or catch and kill both the criminals and the godfathers.

Md. Ghias Uddin Pathan
Sector-03, Uttara Model Town
Dhaka.

Saga of SUVs

Rafiqul Hasan's incisive report (DS: Jan 17) is an eye-opener that shames us. The SUVs that should be plying on off road rural areas facilitating the development activities in the district and outlying areas, work in the lap of luxury at the call of the topmost in Bangladesh! Should we be surprised by being crowned the King of Corruption three years running? If such be the norms at the top, one wonders where is their honour, dignity and integrity; and the example they set for all of us to

follow?

Criticism aside, which I am sure is deserved; let us look at some pragmatic solutions, which can be summarised as follows:

Send at least one or two SUVs (the newer the better) to each of the districts, and if numbers permit at least one to each upazila headquarters. This will motivate the officials there to visit and oversee various development activities in remote locations. It will also compensate them to some extent for the lack of other amenities living far away from the divisional headquarters. I believe this will result in better performance by these officials.

In future, ban or impose punitive surcharge for the import of any SUV or similar large engine capacity passenger vehicle, with no surcharge if powered by diesel engine.

Import Hybrid cars and bring down hydrocarbon fuel consumption nationally around 60 percent at least! The government should encourage private importers to go for Hybrid cars, SUVs and light vehicles which are already marketed by Toyota and Honda and by Ford within the next six to eight months. These vehicles should be given very encouraging import duty structure say (5% maximum). The revenue lost in import duty will be more than made up by savings in hydrocarbon fuel import. Overall, it will be a tremendous national saving.

From July 2005 budget period, or even earlier, prices of all lighter hydrocarbon (petrol, octane etc) fuels should be increased by 5 to 10 percent to accelerate change over to Hybrid vehicles and discourage gas hungry larger vehicles. Similarly, import of all petrol based light vehicles be slapped on with a Hydrocarbon surcharge of say 15 to 20 percent over the existing duty structure to discourage petrol driven passenger automotive vehicles being imported, and encourage import of Hybrid vehicles.

From 2006 budget period the government should encourage and support the export of all petrol driven passenger vehicles on 'as is where is' or reconditioned basis to discourage the use of these gas-guzzlers, and remove them from Bangladesh.

Apart from very little fuel consumption, Hybrid cars are practically free from environment pollution; an important bonus particularly for our vehicle crowded cities.

As a citizen, I volunteer to constructively discuss the issue with relevant officials of the government and concerned agencies, if the government is really serious about introducing Hybrid vehicles and save our ever-increasing gasoline import volume by at least sixty percent! With this move, may be even Asst. Secretaries could get a Government Hybrid SUV and not consume over 100 litres of petrol a month!

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

IGP's case

Recently, we have seen a contempt of court case resulting in conviction and punishment of a very senior member of the executive i.e. the inspector general of police. As the head of the police department, he defended his subordinate in a manner which was treated as an act of contempt by the court. The IGP could feel the nerve of the court and subsequently he tendered his apology. But the court did not accept the apology. The IGP got a punishment which cost him his job as well as future prospects.

I have no comments at this stage and have to accept the present approved procedures of dispensa-

Dhaka University halls



Dhaka University was once known as the "Oxford of the East". Students come to this university for higher studies

and a vast majority of them have to stay in halls. But there are some problems in every hall.

Firstly, to retain control of a seat the students have to take part in politics. Whoever is active in politics gets a seat

very soon. On the other hand, the future of a 'non-political student' is rather bleak. If any student stays on a seat without the permission of political leaders of the hall, he may have to face dire consequences.

Secondly, in a tiny room at least 12 to 16 students have to stay, which is extremely uncomfortable, to say the least.

Thirdly, the members of hall staff are not trained or motivated to do their work. They have not been doing their duty perfectly. As a result, bathrooms of the halls are not clean and that may have a lot to do with the spread of diseases in the halls.

Fourthly, canteens of the DU halls have been serving rotten foods in dirty plates to the students. So the DU authorities should take proper steps to solve the problems as soon as possible, if they really care for the well being of students.

AFM Masrur
University of Dhaka

tion of justice. I hope the government must have taken serious note of this episode. It must now legislate a law to create equilibrium between various organs (executive, legislature and judiciary) in such a way that none of them could get supremacy over the other.

Finally, I would humbly suggest that any inter-organ conflict should be referred to the President who will act as a neutral referee and will exercise full powers for disciplinary action against any member of the three organs found at fault for some reason or the other.

MD. Alauddin
Dhaka

"Keeping Mps under the thumb"

Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman, a former MP Kishoreganj, has written an article under the above caption in the Political Reform section of your 14 January anniversary special issue. Mr. Akhtaruzzaman is very critical about Article 70 of the constitution as an MP cannot vote against the party he or she belongs to. He has questioned the quality of MPs, their role in parliament and so on.

Mr. Akhtaruzzaman happened to be a JS standing committee member and he was very much critical about the performances of the institutions of which he was a member and he did not hesitate to recommend penal actions against many of those institutions.

The truth of the matter is that there are too many shady deals in different sectors that need to be investigated as not many individuals appear to be above question.

Mahmud Ali
Shiddeswari Lane
Dhaka-1217

Test win and politics

Bangladesh's first ever Test win after five years and 35 Tests should bring about a change in our debased political culture if the politicians display the right sensitivity and back up the young heroes in the field. That is what is expected now from the political leaders; and they should not disappoint the public aspirations and hopes in governance. Make some sacrifice and open a new chapter in political, social behaviour.

After the 1971 struggle, this win is another occasion when the whole nation is united in euphoria. This great effort by our boys should act as a catalyst for greater performance in the other sectors. It is the right time to contain corruption, through a transparent political culture, because bad politics encourages corrupt practices.

The solution is very simple: give up misuse of power and influence. Keep within the limits of moral injunctions. The bandwidth is leaking due to political floods every now and then. The politicians lack internal discipline, and the will power to resist temptation.

Do not make this young nation a storehouse of short-cuts. It never pays, because time and circumstances would take its toll later. There is nothing free in life, and everything has a value, and a price.

Why this attack on politics? The evil effects of bad politics has seeped into each and every sector of the society, and the politicians are aware of it. No other sector exerts so much undue influence in daily private or public lives. Where is the sense of responsibility in those who are having the best in life, by hook or by crook? Violence in politics is fast spreading inside

the underworld of politics. This insecurity is self imposed, as it is one of the moral punishments, which acts automatically.

In politics, teamwork at the national consensus level is not working. The nation has become a victim of fissured and truncated politics, led by party considerations. Now religion and terrorism have infiltrated the political culture, widening the cementing bond. Bangladesh is without a sense of direction for three decades!

We have lessons to learn, but we are not willing to make a united effort.

permanent. It also recommended establishing a foundation with representation of donors, civil society, and SMEs' associations to look after the SMEs.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the proposal in a meeting chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M. Saifur Rahman and shall now ask the industries ministry to work out the details and materialise the decisions.

But I wonder why while making and approving such a proposal neither the CDSMI nor the Cabinet

after the SMEs as recommended by CDSMI. We have already organisations of trade, commerce and industry at national, district and metropolitan level for this job. Above all we have the Board of Investment to look after the industries in the country. The BOI working in tandem with various chambers of commerce and industries is the most competent authority to implement the recommendations of CDSMI.

In the light of the above discussion, I would like to suggest the authorities concerned,

Maintenance of roadside drains



Almost every road within the city has got side drains. These drains carry wastewater and rainwater. But these drains have lost almost 95 per cent of their capacity to perform the functions.

We understand that the task of looking after the drains is assigned to the DCC. The Rokeya Sarani running from Mirpur Sec 10 to Agargaon has side drains more or less 6 ft deep. Total blockage of this side drains easily draws attention of onlookers. We, therefore, request the DCC authorities and concerned ward commissioners to kindly look into this little matter. It is termed little because it will not require high tech, high skill and big apparatus to resolve the problem.

The firm will of the DCC and engagement of its conservancy services are enough for the task.

Tapader Md Khalilur Rahman
Mirpur, Dhaka-1216

May our cricket boys infuse the nation with the right approach and spirit.

AZ, Dhaka

Tax holiday for small industries

This has reference to a news item headlined "Small industries to get long-term tax holiday" which was published in your daily of January 6, 2004.

Having gone through the said news item, I understand absolutely that the government formed a Committee on Developing the Small and Medium Industries (CDSMI) in 2003, headed by prime minister's principal secretary, to submit a proposal to boost the growth of small and medium industries in the country.

In the proposal the CDSMI made recommendations of rendering facility of tax holidays to small enterprises having a maximum investment of Tk 30 lakh for a period of seven years in Dhaka and 10 years in Chittagong and also vat exemption on their investments is permanent. It also recommended

taken into account the definition of a small industry, defined as a small enterprise which invests a maximum capital of Tk 1.5 crore. The government redefined the capital of a small enterprise as Tk 30 lakh (from 1.5 crore). It will deprive the small industries having an investment of over Tk 30 lakh and up to Tk 1.50 crore and as such the recommendation will fail to serve the purpose of the government eager to boost the growth of small and medium industries in the country.

If we take into consideration the fixed costs of a project comprising land, building and machinery, the amount of Tk 30 lakh will be too meagre to construct a factory-shed on a piece of land, not to speak of the cost of machinery and lots of other financial requirements. So, the proposal should stick to the government definition of small industries having Tk 1.5 crore of maximum investment or capital to enable them to enjoy tax holiday and vat exemption.

Secondly, I don't see any utility in establishing a foundation to look after the SMEs as recommended by CDSMI. We have already organisa-

tion of tax holidays and vat exemption should be extended to small industries in the country having a maximum investment of Tk 1.5 crore as per government definition already in force, for a period of seven years in developed areas and 10 years in under-developed areas.

The Board of Investment should be entrusted with the task of implementing the said proposal.

Let the BOI once advertise the said proposal in the media and hundreds of thousands of offers will be pouring in to establish small enterprises in the country and of course with the financial assistance from the banks charging less rate of interest, a demand the finance minister himself advocates.

Then, only then, the real growth of small industries enjoying a lot of financial incentives will take place in Bangladesh to salvage it from painful poverty by creating employment on a large scale.

Mahsub Ali
Abdul Hadi Lane, Dhaka

Indian idol and democracy!

Currently a popular satellite channel of India is airing a very interesting and thrilling music competition programme. In this programme, an 'Indian Idol', that is, the super or best singer of India will be chosen through public votes. The competition is no doubt very hard and tough! After each programme, the common Indians are regularly casting their votes in favour of their respective favourites through tele-call or SMS.

At the moment nine contestants are there and in every session of the competition, one participant has to quit the race on the basis of the voting result!

A panel of judges, comprising many celebrities of the Indian music world, also attends each session and passes their comment on each singer after his/her performance. Unfortunately, the judges often get extremely disappointed when they find that a highly qualified (in terms of melody, beat, pronunciation of lyrics, etc.) singer is knocked out of the competition owing to irrational public voting! The judges have the say that the members of the public

do not understand the science and systems in music, they vote on their personal emotion, sometimes even on sympathy!

As an almost regular viewer of 'Indian Idol' programme, I have

also noted that qualities are often ignored by the voters something one would also notice in our political democracy good people and truly deserving candidates sometimes fail to win an election

due to 'poor' voting!
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