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.



Too Sharp, too furious!

It was a very dark and cold night is not only difficult to bear but the rich and priviledged ones of at Jahangirnagar University dormitory. As dark and cold as death. The window was broken and the chilling winter wind was as sharp as a blade. I had neither a woolen blanket nor a and how helpless these people thick pull over. Only a thin katha are who does not even have any was my prop! I was trembling all through the night! People say it is difficult to bear the sudden cold wave in our country. I say it

sometimes it keeps you awake the whole night.

This was the first time I realised how deadly winter can be for people who are homeless warm clothes to protect them-

I have a request to everyone. Ours is a poor country, but if

the society can help the poor and underprivildged people all over the country, specially in the northern districts, their sorrows and sufferings during the winter can be lessened.

After all, we all as human

beings have a duty towards

other human beings who need

our compassion. Cantara Wali Ruhi, Dhaka

Dear readers,

We have a new e-mail address for the Letters to the Editor page. Please send your letters

letters@thedailystar.net Udatta Bikash, Ph.D.

Saleem Samad granted political asylum in Canada

The Bangladeshi journalist with an international reputation, Saleem Samad has been granted asylum in Refugee Board (IRB) of Canada in a hearing on 19 January made the decision offering him this protec-

In the verdict, the senior member (judge) of the IRB mentioned that Mr. Samad's statements (both written and oral) have corroborated with the country reports by different bodies and international agencies including the US State Department (Human Rights Report 2004), Amnesty International, Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) etc.

Mr. Samad, the Bangladesh Correspondent of the Paris-based RSF and TIME (Asia), and also the Diplomatic Correspondent of the Dhaka daily The Bangladesh Observer was arrested and detained by the authority in Bangladesh in February 2003. He was released on killing the innocents with the

later reportedly through interventions by the RSF and various other influences.

I feel sorry that a country like ours could not provide a safe shelter to a dedicated journalist like Mr. Samad. How unfortunate we really

Human Rights Practitioner

Godhra "Killing" revealed!

And finally the truth has seen the daylight. The incident that killed 59 Hindu pilgrims in a train in Godhra was result of an accident. This occurrence was neither triggered by any Muslim mob nor was it a part of international conspiracy but just a simple mishap that started inside the coach "without any external input", bravely declared by Indian government investigation on January 17th. But the question is what good would this finding do to the Muslim population of Gujarat when the damage has already been done.

Helplessly the world witnessed that this train fire incident set off a riot against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. What was most disturbing of all was the role of the then government Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). During this tragedy, intentionally or unintentionally, the BJP government not only went silent but also played the role of a bystander as their fanatics went

sanctuary of the government of that very state. Obaidur Rahman

Gopibag 1st Lane, Dhaka-1203

Child admission

Admitting a child in a reputed school is like a bad headache for many parents in Dhaka. Children are deployed like troops, fighting for seats in Grade 1. In schools like Government Laboratory or Viqarunnessa, 6 to 15 candidates appears in tests for one seat. As a result, parents have to take their children to tutors, or teach themselves. Why should a child learn things even before joining schools? Isn't it the school's responsibility to teach them the basics.

I think now is the time to take this matter seriously. Dhaka's population is rising, and parents are likely to face more trouble admitting their child in the future. The Ministry of Education must act now. We need more primary and high schools of good standard.

Maple Leaf International School, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Missed call is not

anoption I can't totally agree with Cantara Wali Ruhi, who in her letter gave her personal view on mobile culture and recent missed call syndrome. Though I do agree with her on some point. Yes, unnecessary missed calls

Re: The Next Islamist Revolution?

Griswold's disturbing yet detailed report published in the New York Times Magazine of January 23rd, 2005, about Bangladesh essentially turning into a breeding ground of religious extremists. I have also read the short responses to it by Iftekhar Chowdhury, the Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the UN, and Zahirul Haq, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry External Publicity Wing as quoted in your newspaper on January 26th, 2005.

As a Bangladeshi my natural inclination is to be loyal to my country and to defend it with if nothing else but all my heart especially at a time when there is so much blatant hypocrisy and deliberate misrepresentation of developing (particularly Islamic) nations by the western media. Yet, there are plenty of cases of corruption (Enron and Haliburton in the US), nepotism (speeding up immigration cases of nannies in US and UK by respective cabinet level officers/candidates), abuses of human rights (Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib prisons) and pure stupidity (Britain's Prince Harry dressed up as a

Nazi at a party) even in the

But, can we afford to take such a dismissive view of everything in life? Take for instance the dramatic picture of a bare human standing in a pool of bovine blood in Dhaka during Eid and published in the BBC news website taken by Roland Buerk, their resident correspondent in Bangladesh. It is part of series of 12 rather well composed photographs titled Fighting Corruption at Eid Festival Cattle Slaughter" depicting lavishly dressed folks at the prayer, beggars on the street, RAB trying to keep bribery at the market at bay, a mullah's face dotted with animal blood, people haggling over cattle worth many times their monthly income etc. Are they designed to portray Bangladeshis as barbaric, unhygienic, poverty stricken, corrupt yet zealous Muslims trying to live beyond their means? I

I read with interest Eliza doubtit very much. Some view- attempt to discredit Ms ers will see Bangladesh as a nation striving to play a rather delicate balancing act given all the realities yet others will be less enthused by our ways.

It is very easy for our man in the UN to announce Ms. Griswold's prolific report with specific allegations - most of which are also corroborated and were exposed initially by some of the most credible Bangladeshi media organisations - as "one sided, baseless and politically motivated". But as most expatriates who often find themselves on the front line of defending Bangladesh's "image" abroad, I can say that such pithy remarks do little to consolidate the nation's credibility. On the contrary, it gives fodder to our enemies and embarrasses our well wishers. One sided and politically motivated the report may be, and it doesn't take a genius to name three obvious, benefactors: the Awami League, India and pro-Zionist lobbies in Washington and elsewhere.

Taking a logical view on this, who has the better perspective: the reporter who travelled to the remote village to investigate or Mr. Haq, the civil servant in Dhaka? Given that only recently the local press has again reported on Bangla Bhai's attempted misdeeds, what makes the director general at the foreign ministry think the NY Times report is "humorous"? Alas, I am sadly reminded of the collusion and incorrigibility of the top civil servants as exemplified by the disappearance of thousands of government owned vehicles earmarked for donor aided development projects in remote areas which turned up in the personal use of the friends and family of these very officials. Furthermore, when the anti-corruption commission made an issue out of these disappearances, it seemed the civil service did its very best to not only discredit, but also cripple the very commission. Do we not see a pattern of behaviour of shooting the messenger by the civil service? Indeed Mr. Haq insults the intelligence of the readers in his California, USA

Griswold's report when he says, Since there is a question mark in the headline, it suggests the author herself is not clear and confident about the subject

What if the NYT Magazine report is right and Bangladesh really is on a slippery slope to becoming the next den of anarchists and parasites? Then aren't some of the very conditions for these irritants to prevail: (a) a weak, unstable and unwieldy centralised government without any political vision; (b) near collapse of law and order situation; (c) high unemployment and disenfranchised youth; (d) severe lack of infrastructure and development; (e) rampant corruption in the civil administration; (f) politicisation of educational and commercial institutions; (g) lack of industrialisation and excessive red tape for entrepreneurship, to name but a few already in place in Bangladesh?

Now, fixing any one of these is a gigantic task in itself that requires generations worth of investment in human and monetary capital. While the betelleaf-chewing-fatwa- giving Muftis in parliament are proud to become easy baits for the likes of Ms Griswold to make sensational stories out of, it is far more important for the stake holders in Bangladesh to realise that it is a wake up call. It is time to change our national attitude and first accept that we have problems and then to face them head on. It is time to come clean and present our side of the story in all its troubling reality to the world instead of getting consumed by past glories and being touchy about every criticism.

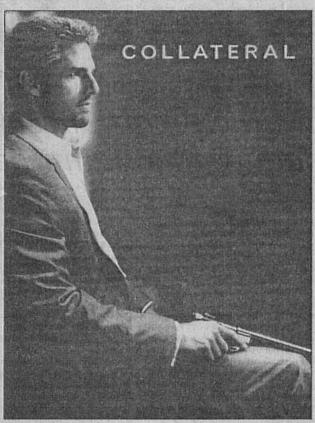
Only by coming clean can we circumvent any embarrassment, intentional or otherwise, caused by these disturbing reports. Many of our Asian neighbours have transformed themselves over the past few decades through strong visionary leaderships. It is time for national soul searching. Shabbir A. Bashar, PhD. San Francisco Bay Area,



Collateral disappointment!

A few days back me and a few of my friends went to see the movie 'Collateral' at the Star Cineplex in Bashundhara shopping mall. But all our excitement was dampened as soon as the movie started. The sound system was not working properly, the quality of the print was really bad and above all the

acknowledge that there was a problem. They just kept saying that everything is fine. The biggest thrill in watching a blockbuster movie in multiplexes is the surround sound system, but while watching 'Collateral' we could not even hear the dialogues clearly as the volume was so low,



authority present refused to only the front speakers were on and the rest of the speakers were all mute. After watching the flick for a while and groaning in our seats for having paid Tk 200 each for a premium seat, I could not take it any more and went outside to tell the staff present there to do something about the sound, and their reply was most astonishing. They said the volume is very low while the actors speak and it becomes very loud during the action sequences!

Just last month we saw

two English films (Alexander, Oceans 12) in Calcutta at the most renowned 'Inox' multiplex theatre, and I don't even want to begin comparing the standard between the two multiplexes. Just because the 'Cineplex' have no competition in the market does not mean they can feed anything they want to the public and get away with it. We were so excited and proud to have our very first multiplex theatre in the country but all our hopes were dashed with disappointments. My request to the 'Star Cineplex' authority would be to please maintain the standard of the print, sound quality. Wasim, Dhaka

are absolutely irritating and they should be stopped. But I do not know why she criticised our film media to show such element as a plot. Movie is like a reflection of life. The images portrayed in the film Wrong Number' are actually taken from life. Believe or not, 'missed call' is already growing to be a popular trend among the young generation. And they do it all the time. It is totally ridiculous to say that they would be influenced more by a mere movie. I think that if someone gets influenced by watching a movie, consciously or unconsciously, should not watch movies at all. Those who have no control over identifying good or bad are not eligible to criticise either. Criticising has become a popular part time job for few people.

Nadia and Shabnam BBA, IBA Dhaka Universty

The saga of the SUVS

Rafiqul Hasan's incisive report (DS: Jan 17) is an eye-opener that shames us. The SUVs that should be plying on the off road rural areas facilitating development activities in the district and outlying areas, work in the lap of luxury at the beck and call of the topmost in Bangladesh! Should we be surprised in 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 solutions, which can be summarised as follows:

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

2) In future, ban or impose punitive surcharge for the import of any SUV

passenger vehicle, with no surcharge if powered by diesel engine. 3) Import hybrid cars and bring down hydrocarbon fuel consumption nationally around 60 percent at least! Government should encourage private importers to go for hybrid cars, SUVs and light vehicles that are already in the market, within the next six to eight months. These vehicles should be given very encouraging import duty structure (5% maximum). The revenue lost in import duty will be more than made up by savings in hydrocarbon fuel import. Overall, it would be a tremendous national saving.

or similar large engine capacity

4) From July 2005 budget period or even earlier prices of all lighter fuels should be increased by 5 to 10 percent to accelerate changeover to hybrid vehicles and discourage gas hungry larger vehicles. Similarly, import of all petrol based light vehicles be slapped with a fuel surcharge of say 15 to 20 percent over the existing duty structure to discourage import of petrol driven 5) 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 gasguzzlers, and remove them from

6) Apart from very little fuel consumption, hybrid cars are practically free from environment pollution; an important bonus particularly for our vehicle crowded cities. S.A. Mansoor

Gulshan, Dhaka

Thanks to all the three honourable members of the ACC for their opposing the suggestion to hire experts from the ADB and consultants from outside. Some days back the Honourable Prime Minister also indicated that today consultants are hired to do the work which in the past was done by our own officials holding the ranks of deputy secretary and joint secretary. Hiring of consultants does not confer any

be able to stand on our own foot to do important jobs and eventually we will be fit only for odd jobs.

The ACC has rightly voiced the feelings of the people of Bangladesh, which has been retaining its top position for consecutive years securing highest marks in the subject "Corruption." We are a poor country but we

have resources. Most people of the country are fair. For a handful of people who indulge in corrupt practices Bangladesh has retained its name at the top of the list of corrupt countries. The ACC has come into being to combat this.

We pray for its success in fight-Tapader Md Khalilur Rahman Rokeva Sarani

Mirpur, Dhaka-1216

Teaching grammar

I thank Bijoy Mohan Gosswami, Instructor, Comilla P.T.I. Comilla for his comments in the Letters to the Editor on 26/01/2005. But please remember that learning one's mother tongue and a foreign language is not the same thing. It is not possible for the children to learn English language just by imitating their parents as you said. Most of the parents are probably not well verse in the language in the first place. You can never disagree

with this crucial fact. People living abroad with little knowledge of English can learn the language easily smply because of the environment around them in a foreign coun-

You wrote, "I think as a teacher we should not keep anything in front of the students that acts as an obstacle (GRAM-MAR) in their learning process". I don't think so. If students do

not learn grammar at the earlier stages of life then when will they Can anyone do well in the

English for Specific Purpose (ESP), in TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS etc. tests without learning basic grammar?

So grammar should be taught according to the level of the student. But you must apply good method using sophisticated materials in a nice learningenvironment.

Of course there is no short cut way to learn and teach English effectively. Khan Md. Iqbal Hossain,

Rifles College,

Peelkhana, Dhaka

