



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.

# Protect children from war



Over the last decade, two million children have been killed in conflict situations and over one million made orphans. Over six million have been seriously injured or permanently disabled, and more than ten million have been left with grave psychological trauma. A large number of children, especially young females, have been made the targets of rape and other forms of sexual violence. At present there are more than 20 million children who have been displaced by war within and outside their countries. Some 300,000 young persons under the age of 18 are currently being exploited as child soldiers around the world. Approximately 800 hundred children are killed or maimed by land mines every month. The horrific situation attests to a new phenomenon. Almost all the major armed conflicts in the world today are civil wars and are protracted, losing years if not decades; they are characterized by widespread social breakdown and lawlessness, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the indiscriminate use of antipersonnel land mines. Most cynically, children have been compelled to become themselves the instruments of war, recruited or kidnapped to become child soldiers. In the intense and intimate setting of today's internecine wars, the village has become the battlefield and civilian populations the primary target.

Today up to 90 percent of casualties in ongoing conflicts around the world are civilians, the vast majority of whom are children and women.

**Thuihla Mong**  
One-mail

that is urgently necessary for its smooth functioning. I hope the government will materialise the recommendations of the Pay Commission to serve the countrymen, not to garner votes in the next elections.

**Molla Mohammad Shaheen**  
Dept of English, DU

## Exporting Hilsha

Frankfurt is the city of trade fairs. But nowadays Brussels has also started organising international trade fairs. In 2005, as many as 311 trade fairs and exhibitions will take place in and around Brussels. European Seafood Exposition (ESE) is one of them. This fair is popularly known as a Fish Fair. In fact, it is the largest Fish Fair in the world. Every year, fifteen to twenty thousand professional visitors participate in it.

Last year, Bangladesh set up an impressive stall and more or less sixty Bangladeshi exporters and buying agents participated in it. Only lobsters and shrimps were displayed in Bangladesh stalls. But I think among hundreds of different Bangladeshi fishes, we can create an international demand for Hilsha. Hilsha is a nice fish with very good flavour and taste. However, Hilsha is a bony fish, which may be difficult to sell to the Europeans. But if processed properly, it may not be impossible for this beautiful and delicious fish to become a favourite to the Europeans.

I have an idea in this regard. If semi-cooked smoked Hilsha is exported in appropriate packing, an easy market for Hilsha can be created through retail chain stores such as GB, Carrefour, Delhaize, Aldi and Colruyet. The packing should be transparent so that the smoked Hilsha is visible to the buyer. Attractive packing and detailed instruction on the packet will help sell the fish.

**Asif Chowdhury**  
The International School of Brussels  
Belgium

## Tata's investment plans

I am writing in response to the article published in The Daily Star on 14 April 2005 focusing on Tata's plans to use coal as the primary source of producing energy. I just want to point out that in the developed world coal has been made redundant as a source of energy. As a matter of fact most developed economies are moving towards a more efficient and cleaner source of energy. For example, Wind Power is extremely favoured and popular in the United Kingdom and most parts of Europe. I am not mentioning Solar Power in the context of Tata's investment proposal for the Energy Sector in Bangladesh as the capacity of solar power cannot be compared with the extent of Tata's proposal of building up a 1000MW plant. If Tata wants to invest in exploring coal and then in turn export it, that is what the government should look into, as it will be a source of important foreign currency income and trade. But as far as generating power is concerned, the government should stress more or heavily on gas fired plants because of the fact that the government will earn revenues through selling it to Independent Power Producers (IPP) and of course gas fired plants are more efficient than redundant coal fired plants.

If my opinion should matter, I would strongly advise the government not to allow Tata to operate power plants in which coal will be the primary source of their production of energy.

**Nuher L. Khan**  
University College London (UCL)

## Saarc and our expectations

The Saarc summit which was supposed to be held in Bangladesh had to be postponed. This was in every way a frustrating blow to us



# Lawlessness in Iraq

After the war in Iraq, the law and order situation has worsened. Car bombs, suicide attacks and guerrilla fighting are quiet common there. Children go to school with their bags alone with the fear of getting hurt or even killed. The US army has taken measures to prevent insurgents from attacking, but is still struggling to make themselves secure. Since March 19, 2003, more than 1,500 American service men have died, it shows how bad the law and order situation is in Iraq today.

I hope the new president and the new prime minister of Iraq will be successful in improving the situation and make Iraq peaceful.

**Tahsin Hyder, Dhanmondi, Dhaka**

## On '69'

This is in response to Mr. M M Haque's letter titled "On a TV serial" published on April 11. In his letter Mr. Haque expressed his 'grave concern' over the serial '69'. I am quoting from his letter before I try to make my point. He wrote "Yesterday, Sunday (3.04.2005), I asked my children to say their Magrib prayers but they insisted that they

to understand." Perhaps I understand Mr. Haque's helplessness here. The way he was brought up doesn't match with the way his kids are being brought up. This is the big gap that created his inability 'to understand' why and how a younger sister talks about dating in front of her elder sister! I only can say what seems quite abnormal and fantastic to Mr. Haque, might prove more than natural and realistic to his

or all episodes are full of falsehood, cheating, phony love and unethical stuff revolving around all the young characters in the serial. First, I find it very strange that the man who created 'Nal Piran' could write or think in this fashion, it is pure trash if a comparison is made. It may be popular among the youngsters." Can he please ask his kids whether this kind of 'falsehood, cheating, phony love and unethical stuff' exist

politicians or governance and is a conscious voice of the nation. But none of these issues find place in his plays, stories or novels". Has he forgotten Nal Piran or Ayesha Mangal or Maa?

My last point, Mr. M M Haque was putting unnecessary blame on Mr. Anisul Haque for '69'. At the same time, he was bestowing undue credit upon him for 'Ekannyabarti'. I have a friend in Mr. Farooki's unit. So I know quite a bit about Farooki, his style of work, and his works. If anyone should be blamed for '69', this should be Farooki. At the same time, if anyone should be thanked and credited for 'Ekannyabarti', this should be Farooki again. For he is the mastermind of all his works.

**Mohammed Hossain Doula**  
East West University

## Terrorising the Ahmadiyyas again

The day Islamic fundamentalists attacked an Ahmadiyya mosque in Sathkhira (The Daily Star, April 18) was, once again, a sad day for Bangladesh. The country has seen a string of sad events, mainly man-made, in recent times. The attack on the mosque is among the saddest. You rightly call the attackers bigots and have condemned them in the past. But the full implication of such attacks and the circumstances in which they are allowed to take place, seem yet to sink in our national psyche.

Attacks against religious minorities and sects are a gross violation of the fundamental freedom of faith and expression enshrined in the constitution. This much is obvious and has been repeated *ad nauseam*, by many, including the present writer. In fact, it is easy to be cynical with the frequent use of the word 'enshrinement' and see it in the sense of an entombment of something no longer alive, and hence irrelevant. It may be rather more useful to talk in less lofty terms.

One aspect of the latest attack is indeed quite mundane and, at the same time, a stark reminder of what is at stake. The police are seen to be lending a helping hand to the fundamentalists. The photograph published in The Daily Star shows policemen putting up a signboard which says: "This is a place of worship for Kadianis. No Muslim should mistake it for a mosque." This was not the first time that the police have helped define the Ahmadiyya place of worship. It was in fact a mirror image of police action a few months ago in similar circumstances around another

Ahmadiyya mosque. This was precisely what the fundamentalists wanted: to declare the sect non-Muslim. And the police obliged.

The government has not declared the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim. The action of the four-party coalition government in prohibiting the production and distribution of Ahmadiyya publications is reprehensible and is under legal challenge. But no action has yet been taken to declare them infidels. By siding with the bigoted mob, the police have gone where, the government has not, mercifully, treaded. This is an outrageous violation of the rule of law by its keepers. Senior police officers have either given a nod to such action or have remained silent where silence was not called for. Perhaps the government owes the country an explanation of how such violation of normal rules of conduct in a matter of great national significance continues to be tolerated. The absence of such an explanation can easily suggest acquiescence.

**Mahfuzur Rahman**  
New York

## Jovial tidings

The government is going to implement the new pay scale very soon. They have a plan to implement the recommendations of the Pay Commission in three phases. This bold decision of the government is really a timely one. Frankly speaking, the existing salary of the public servants is very meagre. Their monthly income is not enough to survive when inflation and rise of living costs are frequent in our country. Moreover, the free market economy and globalisation have infused consumerism in the society. Consequently, corruption is so rampant. So the public servants, from bureaucrats to clerks, like greasing of their palms.

The initiative of the present government to raise the salary of the government employees is praiseworthy. The private banks and multinational firms in our country offer handsome remuneration to their employees. But in the public sector the employees have to depend on other sources to eke out a living. In our country most of the university graduates have a huge crush on BCS. But the pay-package here is so poor that it is difficult for them to remain honest. I admire the government's initiative. It will lessen the financial misery of the honest civil servants and inspire the talented fresh graduates to be employed in public service through BCS. It will bring dynamism and innovation in the civil bureaucracy

# Free the universities of politics

I am appealing to the prime minister to ban politics at the public universities. Rajshahi University, the highest seat of learning in the neglected northern region and the second biggest university in the country, has been losing its glory day by day. The university has also been struggling to get back its congenial academic atmosphere due to political unrest.

As a result, the expectation of a session jam free campus is a far cry for the students who want to build their careers as worthy citizens. After taking admission at the department of law and justice in 2001, I witnessed at least a dozen clashes among the students belonging to different political groups.

In the clashes one student lost his life while many others sustained injuries and the university remain closed for more than one year since 2001. Established in 1953, as a result of a series of



movements, the university pledged to uphold the dignity of the nation through providing worthy and trained manpower but has failed to live up to the expectations of people. Like the RU, the condition of other public universities is almost the same.

Both students and teachers indulge in politics and are responsible for the deterioration of the standard of higher education in the public universities. So, I urge the prime minister to consider

the adverse impact of such politics on the educational institutions, especially on the public universities and keep them out of politics for the greater interest of the nation.

There is hardly any country in the world where students and teachers are engaged in such activities that run counter to the academic interests of all concerned.

**Emdadul Haque**  
Rajshahi University

would, but after the serial as they always do. Since I lost my interest unlike 'Ekannyabarti', seldom I sit for the show. My annoyance and irritation exacerbated in front of my children seeing that 'the youngest sister talking about dating openly with her elder sister'. I find it difficult

kids. So there is nothing to be angry! We just need to be a little tolerant if not adaptive. I know my uncle never talked about dating with his elder brother. But we do! Now can I please know what's wrong with that? He further wrote, "the whole show

in our society or not? If it exists, and if someone depicts it, can we hold him responsible for that? How long can we keep our eyes closed at everything?" He (Anisul Haque) writes in newspapers talking about all the problems that is created by the

# Savar tragedy

I am really very much shocked to hear the news of Savar tragedy. My question is, who is responsible for this? Was the plan of that building passed by the authorities concerned? If the answer is yes the blame goes to the authorities, if the answer is no still the blame goes to them.

How could a multi-storied building be raised without permission? Is our government sleeping? Has the government taken any action against those who are responsible for this tragedy?

**Mamun, London**

The tragic building collapse that caused the deaths of probably few hundred innocent people appears to be a text-book example of failure of pile foundation due to down drag (negative skin friction).

The owners of the building reportedly advertised in the newspapers that 60 feet long

the piles were driven for the foundation. As reported in the press (Prothom Alo, April 12, 2005 internet edition), about 30 feet of filling has been placed on the eastern part of the site to fill up a pond or "jheel". The recently placed 30 feet high fill is causing the settlement of the several feet of soft soil in the bed of the pond, while the 30 feet loosely placed fill itself is settling under its own weight. It is thus very much possible that about 40 feet of the upper portion of the 60 feet long pile was not contributing to any load carrying capacity. More importantly, this upper 40 feet portion of the pile was subjected to negative skin friction (down drag) as part of the weight of the surrounding settling soil was transferred to the pile. The actual load carrying capacity of the piles was being generated from the skin friction of only the lower 20 feet of the 60 feet long pile together with the tip resistance.

The load carrying capacity of

the piles was thus barely adequate to carry the negative skin friction (down drag) load and there was probably very little pile capacity left to carry the load of the 9-storey building. It thus appears that the building collapse was due to foundation failure, as the potential for negative skin friction (down drag) on the piles under the site condition was not recognised, and it led to the tragic loss of human lives.

**Shawkat Ali**  
Orlando, Florida, US

The collapse of the nine storey garment factory at Savar with hundreds of people dead and still trapped beneath the rubbles is a glaring example of our inefficiency, lack of equipment and manpower and above all poor planning to salvage only one collapsed building. God forbid, in the event of a major earthquake (Bangladesh is in the danger zone) how will we be



able to tackle the situation when the human and material casualties will be much, much

higher? Have our authorities given any thoughts on that?

If we are not capable of

salvaging one collapsed building, then why are we hesitant to seek help from our

neighbours? what's so shameful about that? At least the death toll would have been less! Or will we uphold the dignity of our country by letting those poor, innocent dedicated workers die in the name of "desher bhaab murti noshto holo rey!"

**Waheeda**  
Toronto, Canada

The government does not appear to have taken the deaths of Savar garment factory workers seriously. Instead, celebrations for Pahela Baishakh went ahead. To add insult to injury a senior minister is reported to have spoken out supporting the owner of the apparently illegally built factory. A major part of Bangladesh's foreign exchange earnings come from the sweat of the garment factory workers. The government and the nation should pay homage to the unfortunate victims. The cause

of the collapse should be investigated and the culprits punished without fear. Family members of the victims should receive adequate compensation.

**Ahmed Khaleed**  
Auckland, New Zealand

I was very shocked to watch the channel 1 late night news recently. My heart bled to see it. The news showed that hundreds of innocent poor people were in between life and death in Savar where the building collapsed!

Some one's wife, some one's mom, some one's sister were crying for their beloved dear ones.

They did not even know whether their relatives were dead or alive! All they could do was to scream!

**Cantara Waii Ruhi**  
BBA, Dept of Mgmt, DU

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