

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.

## WASA, keep up the good work

Finally, the Water and Sewerage Authority has taken up the formidable task of renovating its age-old worn out drainage system which has hitherto been clogged with dirt and rubbish or had dried out due to negligence. The WASA also has taken the massive operation of dismantling the illegal structures built upon its canals and water bodies by innumerable people under the patronage of local

influentials. It is generally seen that during the break of monsoon, most streets of Dhaka get submerged, causing immense sufferings to the city dwellers. The reason behind this problem is a clogged drainage system and the negligence of the authorities towards solving the problem. This time the WASA has really taken up the task seriously to rid the city of stagnant water by repairing,

reexcavating and cleaning most of the drains.

I would like to humbly request the WASA authorities to form a task force whose job would be to monitor and take immediate action if and when it is required; otherwise all its good work will go down the drains. Thank you WASA. Keep up the good work.

**Humayun Hyder**  
Zigatola, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

## Distortion of Bangla

Bangla band music was never given much appreciation since its emergence in the music arena of Bangladesh as some classical music artists, connoisseurs, intelligentsia termed the trend as a violent assault on the serene culture of Bangla music predominantly occupied by Tagore songs, Nazrul Geeti, traditional folk songs and classical raaga songs. But it gained popularity among the young generation, the generation after the Liberation War, when Azam Khan with his songs of social awareness blasted the age-old notion of music in Bangladesh. He is now a living legend. After him, different groups like Feedback, Miles, Renaissance, Feelings (now Nagar Baul), LRB, Souls enthralled the souls of thousands of music lovers. Their brilliance in music composition, captivating voice, harmonious lyrics, passion in expression, outstanding get up (specially that of Miles) played a major role in this respect. Some numbers of these groups have cut a niche in the heart of music lovers. The degradation in social condition, love, depression were the themes they worked on a lot passionately.

Now the scenario is changing. As these groups are getting



PHOTO: AFSAR AHMED

older, the new are turning up. They are not like the old ones as the theory of human history says that the new must confront the old. But the thing is that they are distorting and destroying the Bangla language which was not done by their older counterparts. They are probably devoid of any sense of melody, harmony in music. They are called underground bands; the trend is alternative metal. They are too much instrumental, guitar seems to

raise a storm, drums seem to cause tectonic violence.

The most ridiculous thing they do is that they distort the accent of Bangla words. They pronounce them in the English accent, keeping the Bangla 'Ra' sound, for example, silent, which really sounds cacophonous, disgusting. I believe, in this process, they undermine the harmony of the sounds of a language that sounds so sweet. Some people say that these 'buddies' are from the aristo-

cratic society and taught in the English language, so they cannot pronounce Bangla in the normal Bangla accent. All right, then I do not mind proposing to them to sing in English. English is an international language, people all over the world exercise their different forms of art, be it literature or music in English to uphold their regional identity in the international sphere. So, why should these people not use English if they cannot pronounce Bangla properly? The

degree of acceptance will be measured by the listeners. The listeners will decide whether they would accept them or not.

My request is that the Bangla language should not be distorted. This language certainly possesses a standard form and has a dignified history. This must be taken care of.

**Mahfuzul Haque**  
Department of English  
University of Dhaka

## Wild West situation

A 'Wild West' situation is prevailing in the country. The city of Dhaka and the whole country has become very chaotic. Since early morning the roads are crammed with big and mega-sized vehicles. The drivers keep on honking at will and pleasure. All are restless and lack basic discipline. They inflict physical, mental and emotional injuries to the sane population. Buses park in any corner of the roads. The mega car owners do not realise and appreciate that they live in a small country of 54,000 sq. miles with a population of more than 14 crore. The roads are already crowded and narrow and can ill-accommodate their robust vehicles.

dred millions of Taka.

The new rich are as hungry as sharks! It resembles the 'Wild West' situation of the US during its founding years. Guns, muscle power ruled. It's grab, grab and grab more. They are ever hungry for land, money, wealth.

How can the common people be saved from these greedy, illegal, immoral, unscrupulous goons?

Import of cars over 1500 cc should not be allowed, or very heavy duty should be levied to discourage such import. The civil society and local bodies should be strengthened and empowered more to combat the evils.

**S N Mamoon**  
Dhaka

## Building collapse at Savar

To me and to everyone this is really a great tragedy. It seems the government is not careful or duly concerned about these wobbly buildings. If the people were warned or alerted, this might not have happened. Such occurrences are the results of the negligence of the authorities concerned. We have become very insensitive in the past few years and do not care about the people who live and die around us every day. I was shocked when I read the news and saw the pictures of the mishap.

Let us pray to the Almighty for those deceased brothers and sisters who lost their lives in this unexpected and sudden accident.

**Abdullah Hussain**

On e-mail

## Savar tragedy and Pahela Baishakh

I am really saddened at the gusto of celebration of Pahela Baishakh in Dhaka.

How can we be so insensitive? As a nation, it is time to think deeply of our priorities. How much value do we place on the lives of our fellow countrymen? I saw the New Year celebrations in Dhaka while the rest of the world was agonising at the devastation of Tsunami. The same thing happened again. While thousands of relatives of the victims of building collapse were weeping, they celebrated Pahela Baishakh with due pomp. How unfortunate!

**M. A. Islam**  
US

## Pahela Baishakh or Pohela Boishakh?

I could never figure out why we choose to use the letter "a" when we write things like "Pahela Baishakh" and "Rabindranath Tagore". Shouldn't that be spelled with the letter "o" instead, since "o" has the more correct sound than "a"? It seems like we still follow the remnants of British colonial pronunciation by using "a" in these words. Also, why do we write the more British-sounding "Tagore" and not the correct-sounding "Thakur". I have nothing against the British. I just think that we should be spelling Bengali words more correctly so that people like me do not have to read "Pahela Baishakh" a second time to understand that it's actually "Pohela Boishakh". Just a thought!

**Mahmud**  
Boston, US

## Refreshing tea

Tea as a hot drink was unknown in our country until the Ispahanis promoted this natural coloured and flavored hot drink in the early twentieth century. The Allied Forces during the two world wars utilised tea as hot drink for its caffeine content to keep the officers and troops awake in the battlefields.

The O.K., Delhi Muslim Hotel, Gulistan, Sweet Heaven, Rex, Sakura and other restaurants in Dhaka were popular for serving tea in pots for customers of different professions.

These days when Dhaka has more places serving Chinese, Indian and Italian foods, it is imperative that as one of the largest tea producing countries, we should be promoting 'tea houses' with turban clad bearers serving tea in gorgeous pots and trays with slices of fruit cakes and large samosas both for the tourists, expatriates as well as the local tea drinkers.

**Golam Ashraf**  
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka 1206

## Be smart, by being yourself!

I am not sure I understand the connection between being smart and speaking English with correct pronunciation. People who would like to learn English and want to feel comfortable in an increasingly globalised environment will be better placed. That is all great! But claiming English speaking Bengalees any smarter than Bangla speaking Bengalees is absurd. People can be very smart/intelligent but may not speak in English. There are plenty of examples. Many Japanese and Chinese scientists are very good at what they do in their fields but do not always speak

English like native speakers. I do not see their works are any less valued, for that matter! Our national poet Nazrul, despite having no higher education, wrote and composed some brilliant literary pieces.

No doubt language is a very important part of communication but equating linguistic skills with smartness is simply not right. If people are not trained to express properly in their own languages, a foreign language would be very little help to them in becoming smarter.

English alone would not make anybody smarter but real education would. Are we learning for acquiring knowledge or just to impress others? Do we have teachers who can take us beyond the syllabus? Do we have students who would demand more than what is in the books? If shortcuts are the main venue for our current and future students, I am afraid we may have to keep learning different languages every few years! My humble advice is: Be yourself and learn your subjects with passion, be it English or be it math!

**Dev Saha**  
Boston University

## Arms race in the region

This is in response to Mr. O H Kabir's letter on arms race in the subcontinent. I strongly disagree with Mr. Kabir's opinion/suggestion to upgrade the Bangladesh Air force with F-16 aircraft. We need to strengthen our economy first. We can't afford to buy F-16 or expensive



PHOTO: STAR

## Occasional patriots!

The month of independence has come and gone. Three special months of the year--February, March and December make us all conscious and patriotic about our motherland and language! During this time most of us think of, speak and write about our liberation war, freedom fighters and our beloved 'Bangla' language. In other times, strangely, we care less!

**Sadat Shahriar**  
EEE, RUET, Rajshahi

things like that at the cost of 14 crore Bangladeshi people. We can barely afford to have an armed force of the present size.

If I ever have to agree with you to get into the arms race, then I would rather go for acquiring nuclear power so that our neighbors think twice before violating our borders, depriving us from our share of international water and on many other issues we come across every day. Certainly you can buy (not earn) respect from the entire world by just having nuclear technology.

Would you like to have one?

**Delwar Hossain**  
San Francisco, US

## Obsession with westernisation

It is curious to see the feeble arguments presented by Naeem Mohaemen, "Obsession with tradition", DS, 30 March. The writer collected a few statistics, such as, HDI, HPI, 29% living on \$1/day, and 35% living below national poverty line to make his case look respectable. We all know these statistics, they are not rocket science. What's important is to interpret data to have meaningful analysis and develop a concerted vision to redress our financial woes.

How do the above depressing facts relate to Friday as being the national holiday instead of Sunday? Do people in Bangladesh have the genetic or biological propensity to produce more on Friday than Sunday? Productivity is a complex factor of work environment, social/political and regulatory condition, work attitude, work ethics, competitiveness, reward, innovation, strategic planning etc. and not just business synchronization with Western holiday as the writer asserts. Generally, most of our trades with West are time-insensitive in nature, unlike currency trading or oil spot sales. Moreover, these days financial transactions happen over electronic banking and Internet and they are Friday or Sunday blind, thus

the Roman Empire during the 2nd and 3rd century, the Christians ran into a headlong collision path with the pagan Romans, who used to worship their Sun god on Sunday and that is how the name evolved. To avoid persecution, the early Christians aligned themselves with the Roman weekly holiday as their own religious resting day. That's how Saturday and Sunday became the defacto western holiday after the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Western weekly holiday embodies history and tradition for them as Friday does for Muslims.

Conversely, if we were to argue that the West has to align with the East by changing their weekly holiday, any Western citizen will laugh at this ridiculous idea. Or should we prescribe the same dress that a European wears for a tribesman in Africa, just because that will synchronize the dress for everyone so that only GAP or Levi's Jeans exist? The world is a rich place with its diversity, tradition, cultures and lifestyles. One has to learn to respect difference as essential part of human enrichment process. It's not bread alone that matters how one earns his bread is equally important. It is as much laughable to ask an European/American to give up his lifestyle as it is for us.

We need to change our attitude.

**Feroze Alam**  
Toronto, Canada

## "RAB or ROB"

Thanks to Mr. Rahman for his opinion (DS: April 11). Starting from the following words of his last sentence "misdeeds carried out under the patronage of their godfathers", let us analyse the situation dispassionately. What Rab is doing is rubbing out the bottom rung of criminals; not the Godfathers. Eliminating ten godfathers would have eliminated the equivalent of at least two hundred or more criminal elements. Has Rab done it? The answer is a big 'NO'. Do you remember known undesired elements being publicly photographed with our political elite? Has Rab done anything about it? Once again the answer is 'NO'.

Rab if it really wants to be an effective criminal eliminating machinery; which was created because of corruption and mismanagement in police; (with some honourable exception); then like Caesar's wife it has to be above suspicion. If Rab is not absolutely cleansed of any misdeeds, it will end up just another set-up like the police, the erstwhile Rakkhi Bahini, only more frightening and dangerous; armed with armored personnel carriers and helicopters! May be these accessories are needed to catch the godfathers! They should rather be armed with detective capability to root out mindless killers, sundry criminals and most importantly their godfathers with various levels of patronage who till date have not come under the "crossfire" of Rab.

Till such time comes I am a bit skeptical as to how effective they can be in rooting out crime; for beneath the veneer of political activism (honourable exceptions excluded) we reach into the various subcutaneous layers of criminal activity. I wonder if Rab can bring them under their "crossfire".

**S. A. Mansoor**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Wail of a widow

I read the write-up "The burden of my memories" of Asma Kibria, the widow of former finance minister SAMS Kibria published in The Daily Star on April 10. I was very much meticulous while I was reading the article.

Before the assassination of Mr. Kibria I knew very little of his life profile. He was a luminary. He loved his motherland more than anything else. His selflessness, patriotism, dedication, commitment and sacrifice baffled me a lot. He was a worthy son of the soil. He became the victim of the nasty politics of our country. I am really shell-shocked at the demise of Mr. Kibria. His simplicity and patriotic zeal stirred me immensely. I am very much appalled at the anguish of Asma Kibria. We can express our heartfelt commiseration only. But the callousness of the government to probe the Kibria murder case to bring the culprits to book saddens me. The dilly-dallying of the government about the involvement of FBI is really enigmatic. Actually, all civilised human beings should come forward to trace the culprits without any delay. The government should not be allowed to play any political game on this issue. I hope the authorities will take up this matter with utmost sincerity and urgency to forestall the collapse of all norms of civility in our society.

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



## Minority issue

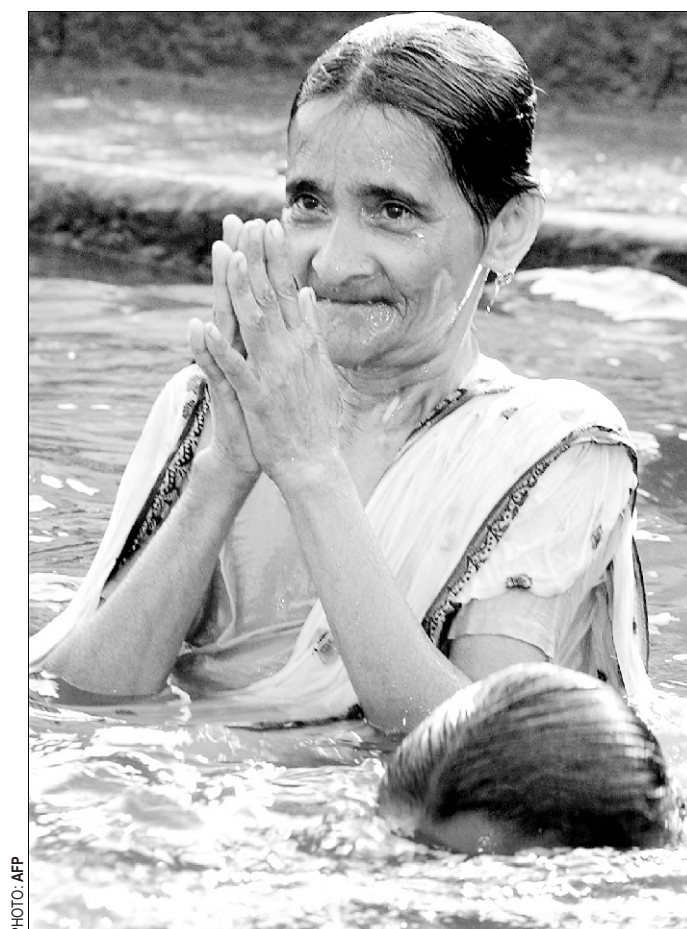


PHOTO: AFP

Sometimes I see in the papers that minorities are suffering. They are being tortured by the members of the 'Majority' community! So it is. In the 21st century we are dividing humans according to their religion. We are leaving in a so called civilised country. Does civilisation teach you to divide human beings according to such an issue over which he or she has no control? People feel shy to say that Hindus are a minority. But they don't feel shy to torture them. Carry on!

**Hasnat Ahsan, CUET, Chittagong**

## Sound and sensibility

In our daily life we have to spend a significant amount of time in roads. There is a great and unfortunately intangible terror on the roads. This terror is sound, noise. From preachers to simple mobile hawkers, everyone is making noise. No one even bothers! Bus drivers honk whenever they like. Private cars honk in the jam as if honking would reduce it. The cinema promoters play songs and dialogues of movies as loud as they can. The so called religious books seller make noise.

I would like to ask the common people whether they feel the importance of taking a position against such sound pollution or not. I would also like to know whether there is any authority to monitor all these?

**Farhan, Maghbazar, Dhaka**

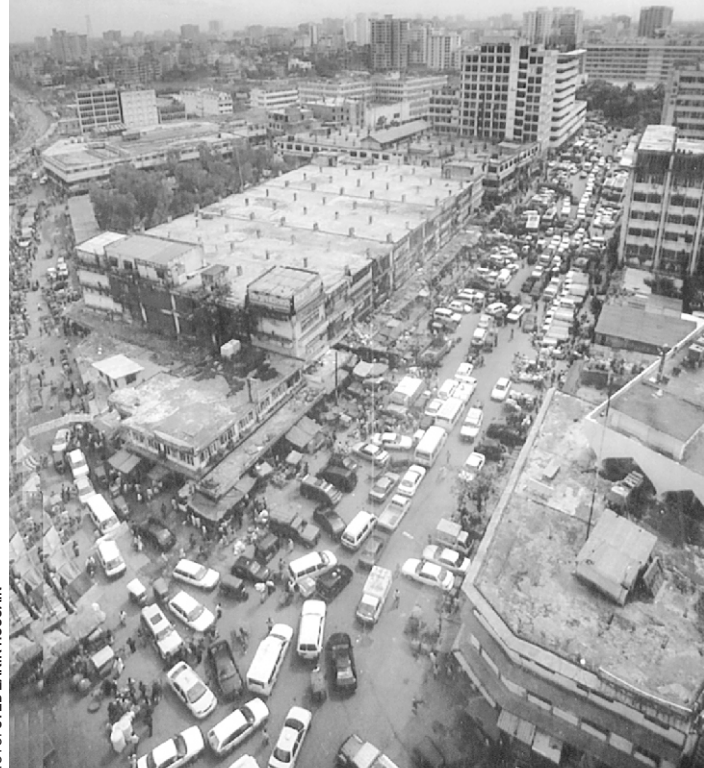


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