

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.

DC-10 crash in Chittagong



It is a miracle that none of the 216 people on board Biman's Dubai-Chittagong-Dhaka service flight no. 048 were seriously hurt when the DC-10-30-ER (registration S2-ADN) approached from the east and landed at Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong.

In a posting on an airline enthusiast's website, www.airliners.net <<http://www.airliners.net>>, a Biman engineer, Mojibur Rahman, is quoted to have said, "For unknown reasons, the right engine caught fire before landing and melted some tires of main landing gear causing the collapse of four main landing gears at touchdown." The posting, referring to a number of unofficial sources stated that the captain sought landing clearance from the control tower but he was denied clearance on the grounds of poor visibility (weather reports suggest southerly wind of 6 knots, rain and dew reducing visibility at the time, 8:50am, to 2km whereas the entire runway is just over 3km long). The captain ignored the tower instructions and decided to land anyway. Some Bangladesh media reports have alleged that the captain was not only inexperienced and unqualified to fly such an aircraft but

also that he had been binge drinking while off duty.

I have some comments. First of all, despite all the odds, a major disaster was averted thanks to the collective efforts of the flight crew and the ground rescue team - hats off to each and every one of them! If indeed the aircraft was on fire, then I totally support the actions of the flight captain ignoring tower instructions - he is the ultimate arbiter of the best course of action; the newspaper photographs of the accident show some evidence of this on number 3 engine. If the blood samples taken from the flight deck crew soon after the incident exonerate them from being under the influence of alcohol, I have nothing further to add. On the other hand, I am sure the airline and the laws of the land as well as international aviation rules will dish out exemplary punishment to them should they fail these tests.

Finally, given that Biman is operating a fleet with many of its aircrafts on their last stretch it is little wonder that we do not see more of these near disasters.

Shabbir A Bashar, PhD
San Francisco Bay Area, California, USA

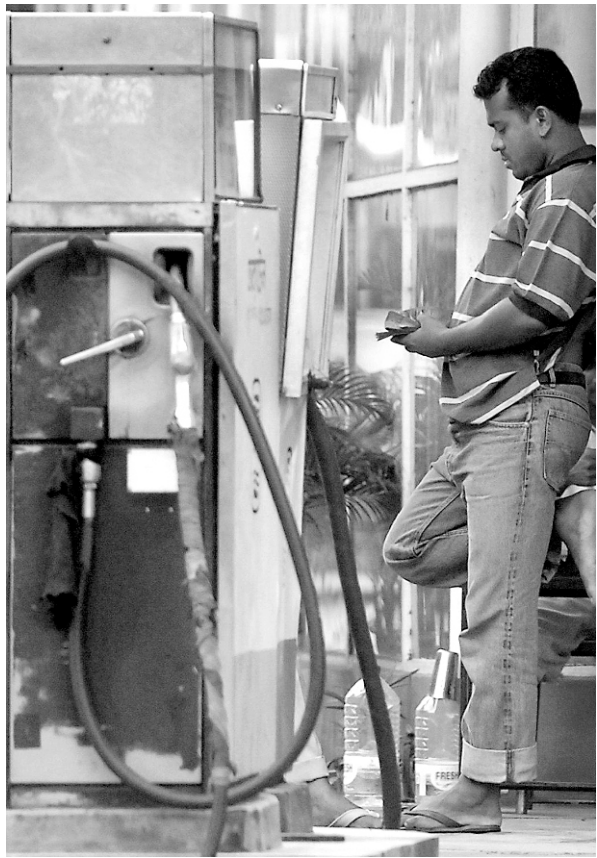


PHOTO: AFP

Oil price

A Bangladeshi service station worker counts the cash at a fuel station in Dhaka. Oil prices remained below 60 US dollars a barrel in Asian trade but another rally was expected soon.

A reader, One e-mail

My country, my dream...

I didn't see our glorious liberation war in 1971, as I was a mere boy about to go to school at that time. However, when I came of age gradually, I learnt how our freedom fighters sacrificed their lives to liberate the land from the filthy clutches of the oppressors. I watched all the movies on the war, read books and met people that helped me to learn the facts, and from that time onwards I started to sense the very essence of the war and tried to visualise the wartime and the heroic deeds of the sons of the land and started to form a dream about my beloved country. I had dream that we all would establish a

discrimination and corruption free society by going forward united where all would be enjoying all kinds of equality and freedom.

We have scaled a modest height, we've ushered in democracy, got blessed with quite a few visionary minds to lead the country. We've progressed in areas like empowerment of rural women through micro credit, education, health and the media that is strong enough to voice and uphold truth by calling a spade a spade.

My dream fumbles at times though our overall progress is quite satisfactory and we are on the march! gets shattered when I see that corruption of all sorts is engulfing the independent country.

We'll once more be the proud

nation that achieved the glory of fighting for its language and freedom.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

Looks!

On 28th June 2005, a special page of Lifestyle caught my attention. That was a report on "Looks". I appreciate Farzana Shakil's make-up book---Looks. It will contribute positively to setting trends in our country. We, the youngsters, are very much enthusiastic about fashion. We want something new. And we also want to adapt ourselves to modern fashion.

We hope the combination of fashion designers, event management officials and beauticians will present us

a new age of style in our country.

Thuinu Mong
Dept. of Marketing
University of Rajshahi

Jet engines and propellers

In his letter published on July 6 titled "Propellers on Jet engines!" Mr S.A. Mansoor writes that The Daily Star was wrong since jet engine cannot have propellers. Actually DS was right, É jet engines can and do have propellers. They are called turbofan type jet engines Many aircraft such as the C-130 Hercules donated to BAF use this type of engines. The DC-10 has 3 turbofan engines.

Imdadul Hoque
WAPDA Colony, Banani

Bangladesh, India and Pakistan

I have read in your newspaper reports on trade between these three countries. Trade between India and Bangladesh should flourish. India and Bangladesh can have a good trade relationship. But trade with Pakistan is another matter. As a Pakistani, I believe Pakistan's goods and products won't be popular in Bangladesh or in India and Pakistan's trade with these two countries is still negligible. Most Pakistanis are allergic to having well developed trade relationship with Bangladesh. Trade with India will go nowhere until the issue of Kashmir is resolved.

The Saarc deal, well, this should be with like minded countries. We Pakistanis are not very fond of Saarc. As here in the United States, the American people are not very fond of Mexico. I may mention here that Mexico is a neighbour of the United States and trade with Mexico is no huge.

The feeling among the Pakistanis is that we don't like to get close to Bangladesh or India. So the spirit of Saarc is absent here.

Masood Khan, Chicago, US

IPP's generation problems

Many press reports on Independent Power Plants in the private sector are being published these days. It is also known that Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission will license, oversee and monitor these IPP projects coming up. One however wonders how BERC will oversee the functions of the PDB, particularly its grid power quality, since except for in house consumption, all IPPs will be coupled to the national grid.

Despite the fact that ERC has a "Grid Code" the national high voltage transmission system does not maintain any acceptable power quality standard. Our national grid suffers from very frequent voltage fluctuations, sags, surges, excursions and interruptions. This needs to be addressed and regulated, otherwise it will cause innumerable trips and restarts of the IPP for faults that lie beyond their control. This will invariably lead to high operation and maintenance cost for the IPP, as its prime mover and alternator will be adversely affected by frequent unnecessary trips. One can visualise it as the unfortunate plight of a small boat tied to large ships' backwash; when coupling an IPP of say 10 to 30MW to a 300MW plus national grid with no stability and quality.

Has the BERC any plans to address, control and rectify this massive variation from any acceptable level of power quality of the national grid?

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

Think about it

I think that only those members of

society who are blind, deaf, utterly clueless or uninformed would say that there is nothing wrong with Bangladesh today. Face it, things are not getting better - we are on a downward spiral, sinking into corruption and lawlessness, which has become the norm rather than the exception. What is more frightening is the unholy nexus between criminals and the powers that be. When ruling party leaders attend the janaza of notorious criminals like Sagir Ahmed, what hope is there? I would like to end this letter by asking readers to think about the following passage from Ayn Rand's classic novel, "Atlas Shrugged", a chilling reminder of the times in which we live:

"...when a society establishes criminals-by-right and looters-by-

law-men who use force to seize the wealth of disarmed victims-then money becomes its creators' avenger. Such looters believe it safe to rob defenceless men, once they've passed a law to disarm them. But their loot becomes the magnet for other looters, who get it from them as they got it. Then the race goes, not to the ablest at production, but to those most ruthless at brutality. When force is the standard, the murderer wins over the pickpocket. And then that society vanishes, in a spread of ruins and slaughter. Money is the barometer of a society's virtue. When you see that trading is done, not by consent, but by compulsion-when you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing-when you see that

money is flowing to those who deal, not in goods, but in favours-when you see that men get richer by graft and by pull than by work, and your laws don't protect you against them, but protect them against you-when you see corruption being rewarded and honesty becoming a self-sacrifice-you may know that your society is doomed."

Sadat Omar, on e-mail

Lack of sensitivity

We are rebuked often by the Western people for our lack of social consciousness. We seem to be unable to distinguish between what is right and what is not. I reside in a hostel of "International Islamic University" where we have a hostel

for minority students called "North Hostel".

The boys were celebrating "Puja" through using loudspeakers. The sound was so loud that it was almost impossible for us to stay in the room, which is very close to the "Pujamandap", let alone concentrate on anything. This was not expected of them.

I believe followers of all religions should be sensitive to the problems faced by others.

Hosna Ara Lubna
International Islamic University
Chittagong

Rural marketing network

Economist Abdul Bayes has rightly pointed out the weak structures in the rural-urban marketing networks prevailing at present in Bangladesh (DS June 28). Not that the government planners are unaware of the shortcoming; stray development projects and some good work by some NGO nets are trying to help the farmers and other producers. But the grey areas have to be officially noticed and corrective actions initiated (to attract more voters).

The fertility of the Bangladeshi soil is second to none, helped by availability of plenty of water and human resources -- 'lucky to be in a deltaic region'. The cottage industry has made noticeable progress in the last few decades; and, lately, the weaknesses in the SME sector have been identified. What appears to be missing is the integrated overall effect visible to the man in the street, and to the small business groups in the villages. The villagers cannot analyse their own solutions, and can only point out their personal problems. More listening posts are required, properly tuned.

The bug is proper marketing mechanism at different 3-D levels. The middlemen are still holding sway in marketing and distribution transactions, and get richer at the expense of the producers.

One reason is that one viable alternative, namely, the well-tested co-operative system has failed, due to current corrupt practices (political origin).

Unless political governance is honest at the different tiers of transactions, there is no hope for the primary producers in the rural areas to get their due share of the

economic returns, in spite of the best intentions of the prime minister and her cabinet colleagues.

The planned project documents might look all right, but the hidden weaknesses in the field operations have to be tackled with political consensus. The civil service structure had also been contaminated, hence the systems losses in various types of public services leave a lot to be desired.

The one-eyed parliament has no effective output, and its regulatory role has become minimal. There are too many complaints and criticisms, but these do not enjoy the mechanism of proper outlets for corrective actions, on a routine basis. These is too much ad hocism in our political culture, which cannot produce lasting and endurable results.

With pre-mature election overtures, there is no hope for remedial measures during the year 2005. Since 1991, the lack of continuity in political commitments has wrought havoc with the expected faster rise of prosperity in the country.

The strength of Bangladesh is in vast and rich rural base. Much of the foundation has been laid; now the gaps have to be identified and filled in; but nepotism stands in the way. The leadership has to deliver, but not through the microphones and loudspeakers. Inner cleanliness is being neglected.

What has happened to the technical and professional bases inside the political parties? We are too vocal about the details, and assume the bases are acceptable.

A Mahasen
Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

Some good news

In dismal Bangladesh, good news (on Bangladesh) in the press is a rarity. On 19 June, there were two pieces of heartening news: babe Bangladesh became the giant killer in ODI cricket by beating the world champs Australia ("Believe it or not"). Our hidden potentialities have to be tapped. But the 'tappers' (the major section of the leaders of the society) are trapped in their own traps!

The other unusual news is the resignation of a veteran minister in Dhaka for media exposure on alleged dubious transactions. To be tough with one's team members is a difficult task, but leaders have sometimes to take tough and unpopular decisions in public interest. The public credit rating goes up, which is good for the young nation.



PHOTO: AFP

Seeking popularity is a spineless philosophy.

The pessimistic citizens expect some more reshuffle, changes, resignations sacking,

disciplinary action, and punishment; to send the right message to the electorate.

None is indispensable (boshte diley shutey chaey-the

Open 200 taxi stands

The DS editorial of June 17 is encouraging for the middle class taxi users (including 3-wheelers with fare meters). There are so many agencies for planning, operation and co-ordination of the huge public transport system in Dhaka metropolis mega city of 10,000,000 residents and commuters, but there is no relief for the users of taxis. Where is the good output of these combined efforts? The ministry concerned is not answerable?

It is one *ghapla* after another; and we read in the newspapers plans for mega projects like underground, overhead, magnetic and what not, while inland water system is getting stepmotherly treatment, with regular sinking of overloaded launches and no regular river taxi service for the millions of commuters who visit Dhaka city daily for business errands. Look at the way the foreigners are grabbing our energy sectors. Why local joint investment is missing?

As pointed out by a large number of city godfathers, there is lack of coordination in the joint coordination efforts by more than half a dozen paper agencies, who offer free advice, and then look the other way!

Reason? There is no traffic control in our political culture! Pocket the dubious commission in large projects, and then initiate other projects, for steady income! The O&M (operation and maintenance) does not matter --- leave it to the *bhadra* devils in gentlemen suits! This is huge systems loss, and the ministers concerned do not talk about it in public addresses, or in the parliament.

There is no provision to catch the vote catchers! Now married couples' private and political problems are dragged into the political arena for obscene public feasts! It is blue display in red blood! It seems the country of 130m has to be governed by a new cadre of jailers--the whole society has become prisoners!

The transport bungle up is seen replicated in almost all sectors of the society; under the direct responsibility of the government, who appear to be unproductive. The people are fed up with governance; (talk in the language which is easily understood!). How about opening 200 taxi stands in the city, in the first phase? And 5,000 public toilets, @ Tk 2/- per entry? What a nation: can't afford taxi stands and toilets!

If the fare meter system works, then there is hope for good governance. We are very imitative, but good examples are rarely seen for copying!

A Maher, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR