

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.

Street children



The street is not a place to live in. But a huge number of children live in the streets. These children are detached from their families for various socio-economic reasons. Most of them live in open places, especially launch ghats, railway stations, bus terminals, big parks and roadsides. It is really tragic that they pass their livelihood in the streets and suffer a lot. These children are neither cherished nor protected.

They often fall prey to unlawful activities like smuggling, stealing, being pimps etc. They also use drugs or cigarettes to get relief from all sufferings and hunger. They are used by political parties for carrying arms and ammunition, throwing bombs and leading an uncertain life, paying protection fees to stay in public places at night. No parent wishes to leave a child unattended ever for a minute, especially in a strange new environment. But the street children have experienced being left alone to fend for themselves.

We always talk about human rights, but they begin with the recognition of the rights of the children. It is most important for us to ensure their rights and help them grow physically and mentally as worthy citizens of Bangladesh.

Tanin Nusrat Rikta
ELL Department, IUUC

Cylinder gas for kitchens

A news report appeared on July 5 issue of DS, in which our honourable finance minister, supported by our newly appointed energy advisor, said that nowhere in the world people cook rice with piped gas. It is not true. I know people in the US used only piped gas to do their home cooking. However, introduction of cylinder gas might be a welcome step but before doing so I would urge the authorities to look into its advantages and disadvantages. The government may contemplate using metered system by which the charge of gas could be determined by their consumption. I think in this manner wastage of gas will be substantially reduced.

Humayun Hyder
Zigatola, Dhaka

It was reported in The Daily Star that the government is considering altering the mode of supply of gas to homes for domestic purposes. The finance minister has been quoted as observing that nowhere in the world is gas supplied directly through pipes into homes for cooking and other domestic purposes. This is incorrect. In North America, where I have lived for over thirty years, gas is supplied for cooking and heating purposes directly through pipes. Gas is supplied in cylinders only for outdoor barbecue grills, used in the summertime for occasional outdoor meals.

Mr. Saifur Rahman's apprehension is that housewives tend to leave their burners on and waste gas by using it for frivolous purposes such as the drying of clothing. This possibility can be easily circumvented by the introduction of gas meters, which are used throughout North America, and this will discourage consumers from the practice of wasting gas.

Syed Hamde Ali
The Nawab Palace, Bogra

The comment (DS 05 Jul) by our finance minister and advisor to the energy ministry that world wide only gas cylinders are used for domestic cooking is not true at all.

In the UK and other EU countries piped gas lines are introduced in cities for domestic cooking but are installed with a prepaid meter.

Yes it is true that domestic users in Bangladesh waste gas as nobody's business and it has been going on for ages. Many stoves lit at morning are put off at night and this is pathetic sight for those who realise that the next generation will be deprived of this luxury of cooking. A massive awareness campaign by the government and NGOs to save gas can be beneficial, but is not the answer. Neither closing down the piped gas lines to urban domestic

loss of the parents but my question here is what is going to be done about this? What are the authorities going to do? What are the people going to do? You hear all the time of muggers and robbers being beaten to death, the people taking the law into their own hands, but when something like this happens no one is really that concerned. How can that be? Please don't misunderstand what I am trying to say here, I do not, for a second, condone or

I beg to differ with Bangladesh Ansar's decision to send 131 women to Saudi Arabia for household works. My name is Abdullah Al Fahad and

I am currently a student in University of Texas (Student ID 4194976. I lived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for seven years (1993-2000).

During my stay in Riyadh, I read in many articles that household female workers didn't get paid; rather, they got beaten on almost daily basis by Saudi families.

My letter comes in response to Masood Khan's letter from the US where he states that Pakistan should not join the Saarc because it was co-founded by a Bangladeshi leader. He also stated that he and his family had to flee East Pakistan leaving everything behind during the 1970's. He draws an image as if it was the opposite thing, it was because of people like you that we Bangladeshi took to the streets to protect our freedom and rights. And the people of West Pakistan were the ones who benefited by looting our raw materials, which were used to industrialise and modernise Pakistan while we remained in the Middle Ages.

In response to our protests the Pakistanis started the war in which they massacred more than 3 million people and the genocide committed can be ranked within the top ten of the 20th century.

Sauqib Ahmed
On e-mail

This is in reference to Mr. Masood Khan's letter (D.S. 04 July). Mr. Khan may have his own negative views regarding Saarc. I would like to add further to his view that Saarc is a failure despite over 20 years of meetings and deliberations. I consider Saarc as nothing but a grand dinner party of heads of states where leaders smile at each other and shake hands with fingers crossed.

The less we talk about SAPTA and other big dreams of Saarc, the better. Saarc has failed to deliver any benefits to the common people. Today overseas phone calls to Europe, US, Japan, Australia, are much cheaper than making calls to relations and friends in the so-called Saarc countries. This is an example how the Saarc nations have failed to offer the barest minimum benefits to the peoples.

As far as my reading goes, media and people in India and Pakistan are least bothered about Saarc that gets only a lip service.

In my opinion the bilateral agreements that we have with neighbours are far more effective than what Saarc could deliver.

Saarc is "too much ado for nothing".

Ziauddin
On e-mail

Traffic jam

Chittagong is a port city. The people



Beggars

Problems created by beggars are very serious in Bangladesh. The problem is not so acute in the villages as it is in the cities. In Dhaka city, beggars in traffic signal points obstruct smooth movement of the vehicles. If they happen to see any foreigner on the road in a car or walking on the footpaths, they start dogging him or her and make him/her vexed, sad and even mad for a coin. It tarnishes the image of the country. I have little objections against those beggars who are helpless, lame and crippled and blind but those who are not destitute and penniless, and take begging as profession, are really a big problem and a great disgrace for the country. Occupying the important points of the city like traffic signals overbridges, places

of worship like mosques, footpaths, parks, market places and bus stands, they start begging. They make the environment polluted by spreading dirt and filth.

The following remedies are suggested for solving the beggar problem:

(i) All the beggars should be caught by law enforcing agencies and sent to vagrant shelters.

(ii) They should be given vocational training and be engaged in works according to their skills.

(iii) Begging in cities should not be allowed.

(iv) After enacting law, violation of it should be severely dealt with.

Eng Mohammad Ariful Islam

BSC in EEC (RUET)

good for my pride as a Bangladeshi. To see Mr. Ali's piece end with the phrase "Let us not forget, the crying baby gets the milk" is downright painful. I imagine that abroad our nation is perceived as a beggar nation-not to be seen as a country to make reliable investments in, but a nation to give charity to in order to get penance for whatever guilt trip the developing world has placed on the conscience of the West.

For sure, our government is obliged to do whatever it takes to secure a better and brighter future for our poor. But we must be conscious of the damage that every single incident of us asking for the pardoning of debt or for aid does to our name as our nation. We must be conscious of the damage it does to our self-image as an independent people. If we allowed our government to take a loan from these international bodies and if our government promised to pay it back, let us see to it that we do indeed pay it back.

Omar Siddiquee, New York

No security

What country are we living in? Do we have any guarantee of returning back home every day? If we see the newspapers we will get our answer. In this country the businessmen are killed in broad daylight. But it is sad that we are still watching and counting that person as ill-fated.

See the newspapers and just say sorry. If we don't protest this kind of inhuman acts now, one day will come when the people will see our pictures in the newspapers. What will we say then?

Saroar Hossain, EEE, RUET

Downsizing nationalised commercial banks

Most of the nationalised banks are still incurring huge losses. To cut down losses the number of branches of nationalised banks should be reduced drastically. At upazila level there should be no more than one branch of a nationalised bank. At the moment it is found that in many cases Sonali, Agrani and Janata Bank are operating in the same upazila. If Sonali Bank has a branch in one upazila then other nationalised banks should withdraw their operations from that place.

There should be no branch of a nationalised bank below upazila level. This will be an ideal way to cut down losses of nationalised banks. Will the Bangladesh Bank ponder over it?

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury
New DOHS, Dhaka Cantt.

Who is this man?

Sultana Rahman's report (July 6) on the unimaginable inhuman suffering of the unfortunate Nahar was a real eye opener.

The way the unfortunate girl underwent abortion may have few parallels in history. Mankind has advanced far beyond these levels of bestiality and brutality in thought, words and deeds. Who is this Anwar and who are his godfathers that he can carry out such inhuman acts in a civilised society and in a civilised place?

If such an example of human suffering and humiliation is not removed forthwith, then forgive us, if we feel that the chain of god fatherly connection leads up to the very top of the political leadership.

A reader, On e-mail

Resisting dacoits

Nur Jahan's (letters, June 17) comments on 'Resisting dacoits' makes sense and sounds reasonable, but I find myself resenting greatly the idea of a thief just walking away with my possessions or money which I have

worked hard to earn. It is not right for thieves, be they street hoodlums or crooked politicians or businessmen, to take what they have not earned. I am afraid that I would not be able to allow such an act to proceed without trying to stop it if there was any chance at all of foiling the crooks. Of course, I am not crazy, either.

If I were faced with overwhelming force or a loaded gun, I would hope to out-think the crooks or to remember their descriptions well enough to ensure their later capture by the police. Since I am not sure I would act wisely, I hope I never find myself in such a situation.

M Hussain

Tower Hamlets College, UK

DC-10 skids off

Sometime I fail to contemplate some critical matters. Our Bangladeshi guys are not alert to the extent they should be. Why does it happen? It is totally unknown to me? In the case of Biman skid off I would like to hold the pilot hundred percent responsible. All the passengers narrowly escaped death. Why the pilots are not appointed on the basis of quality and merit? Who should be held responsible for this accident has become a matter of common concern among the erudite persons.

I think that firstly we have to catch the authorities appointing unqualified people as pilot. Then we have to hold the pilots responsible. It has become a common phenomenon in our national life to lament when something negative is happening and we also talk of remedial measures. We should think of such measures before things really go wrong.

Bazlur Rahman
Mohsin Hall, Dhaka University

Bangladesh cricket team

We are a new Test playing country in the world. We all know that Bangladesh have been struggling since entering the Test arena. Our only memorable success is that we beat Zimbabwe. But the English media said that our cricket was not of the expected level. They also referred to our grinding poverty.

So, how can we play cricket? The Australians also view our cricket with the same disdain. But they lost an ODI match against us only a few weeks back. So, why can't we play cricket?

Mr Abdullah Al Noman
Int. Islamic University
Chittagong

Illiteracy



Bangladesh is a small country with a huge population. But most of the people of our country are illiterate. A great number of rural people are ignorant about the necessity of education. Due to this ignorance, many parents don't send their children to school. So they are deprived of the light of education. They do not know about the whole world. They don't take care about their health; they don't know what is

good or bad. As a result, they are suffering from many diseases.

Owing to lack of knowledge, they cannot understand the problem of over population. So they give birth to children, one after one, and the unemployment problem is increasing day by day. All these hinder our progress as a nation.

Naznin Akter Nipa, Chittagong Islamic University

homes nor leaving it at the mercy of cylinder gas suppliers would be good. Prepaid meters for domestic piped gas line users is the only option.

Ziauddin Ahmed
On e-mail

Schoolboy's death

I was shocked to read on the front page of The Daily Star the news about a schoolboy being beaten to death. I don't know what to say except to ask everyone that in a so-called civilised society how is it that teachers are still allowed to hit school children? I cannot fathom the

appreciate 'mob' behaviour but when they can get so enraged about something like that then how come nobody seems to be outraged by such a horrible and heinous act? Maybe it wasn't meant to be severe, maybe it was an 'accident' a blow to the wrong place which led to the little boy's death.

The fact is that he was unwell and that just made things worse whatever the case was-- the fact remains that the little boy went to school, he was physically abused and he died.

Zeenat, Gulshan
Dhaka

Female workers

Most of the Saudi citizens have no human rights sense and they consider people from South Asia only good for the dirtiest work possible. We all have heard many such complains already from our men working in Saudi Arabia.

Thus, I would request the Ansar authorities and other related recruitment offices to renegotiate and investigate on this issue. We must not send our people to Saudi Arabia to receive such humiliating treatment.

Abdullah Al Fahad
Arlington, Texas

Saarc and Pakistan

of this city continue to suffer due to traffic jams in some busy areas.

The authorities concerned should carry out a survey to find out and make a list of all important, busy and crowded road junctions and enforce the traffic rules to eliminate traffic jams.

Umme Salma Apan, IUUC

Irreparable damage

We have been losing our valuable national wealth as the roaring gas fire goes up to a hundred feet height every day in Tengratila gas field. But Niko can't do anything. It has announced already that it will be unable to plug the gas well before December. Can you imagine how much financial and environmental losses we will incur till December?

Can Niko compensate for the environmental disaster? It can't. The government should look for alternative ways to extinguish the fire.

Senjuti Shuvo Ahmed
Dhaka College, Dhaka

Our image

This is in response to Mr. Syed Ali's post editorial piece "Bangladesh deserves debt relief too" (20/06/2005).

There's no denying that ours is a poor country, crippled by poverty and social problems. There's no denying that our obligations towards repaying debts to the World Bank and the IMF put pressure on our ability to invest in our own productivity and development.

I, however, cannot say that seeing our prime minister, or any other representative of our people, asking for the cancellation of our nation's debt to the international bodies and other nations does much

The Live 8 series of anti-poverty concerts for Africa took place on Saturday (02/07/05) across the globe. About 200,000 people attended a huge concert in London's Hyde Park, featuring artists such as U2, Pink Floyd, and Madonna, while Tokyo, Johannesburg, Paris, Rome, Berlin, Moscow, Philadelphia and Barrie, Canada also hosting shows. Live 8 coincides with Wednesday's G8 summit of world leaders and is aiming to raise awareness about the need for aid, debt cancellation and fairer trade for Africa. Action Aid, Art for Africa, Save the Children, The Conversation Cafe were there giving out information about the problems in Africa, and encouraging people to understand more

about poverty and the complexity of the problems of Africa, and to participate in making a difference. Contrary to our expectations, these stands were almost mobbed by people throughout the afternoon, and showed that the concert genuinely raised awareness.

In the photo we see that former Irish singer and Live 8 organiser Bob Geldof (C), Kenyan Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai (L) and U2 lead singer Bono show a case with CDs containing signatures and e-mails of people fighting against poverty, 06 July 2005 during the G8 summit in Gleneagles.

Premananda Paul
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

Live 8 concert



PHOTO: AFP