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# Street children's future



My letter is about one of Bangladesh's main problem- "Street children." There has been an alarming rise in the number of street children in the major cities all around Bangladesh. The main reason for this is urban population of Bangladesh which continues to rise alarmingly year after year. The plight of these street children has become a great concern for domestic and international aid agencies.

The rubbish dump that we have in Demra on the east of Dhaka is where one can find most of the street children. The stench that comes from the dump is overwhelming and as one goes nearer one feels like vomiting! It is difficult to believe that anybody can survive in this environment. But every morning groups of children walk across this vast mound of rotting rubbish scavenging for used plastic bottles or similar rubbish. Then they sell these to nearby second hand shops for a small price. Around 20 children or more live in the dump. Most are orphans and some live with their families. They spend their whole day working in the dump looking for rubbish. While working in the streets they are also exposed to all sorts of dangers - from pimps to people involved in criminal activities, and as the numbers rise we are finding it increasingly difficult to help them reach their potential.

The situation here can only improve if the authorities realise that children have a right to be protected. So I fervently request the Bangladesh government and the NGOs in our country to help these children for a better life and a better future.

**Labiba Rahman**  
Dilu Road, Maghbazar  
Dhaka

## Cultural aggression

One of the various aspects of aggression by the neo-colonists is cultural aggression. When the ex-colonies were becoming independent one by one in the aftermath of the Second World War, the neo-colonists accepted the policy of cultural aggression as one of the tactics to remain/sustain their influence and market. Specially, after being defeated in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique etc, the neo-colonialists became sure that at present it is very difficult to win by dint of military might alone against a nation. Rather, it is easier to weaken and bring under control the nation by destroying its culture. So they infuse into the LDCs sexual perversion, drug-addiction, pornography and porno-films, mentality to depend on the neo-colonialists, brain-wash intellectuals etc. They try to divert the people of LDCs, especially to keep away the young minds from revolution or any change in life. The cultural aggressors think that preventive power of a nation will certainly be destroyed, if its culture is destroyed.

Now, the readers! Let us be conscious about our future and present day practices. What are we doing, where are we going? Our youngsters are being misled, but we aren't protecting them! Cyber sex culture has already occupied the young minds. Many incidents of making porno film by cheating girl-friends are reported by the newspapers. The days aren't far away when our children will take their sex partners inside our home and introduce them to us, like they do in the western world.

**Engr. Mohammad Ariful Islam**  
Ramdebpur, Tangail

## Energy sector: poor long-term planning

Bangladesh has enough natural energy resources for internal use for decades (as also some surplus stock for eventual export); but poor long-term planning by successive regimes since early 1990s has resulted in electricity and gas crisis for local consumers, which is visible at all levels (socially, politically, technically, and economically).

Finger-pointing will not solve the problems. For half a century the country has been deprived of gas pipelines in the northern districts; and today enough gas cannot be supplied to the electric power stations, resulting in severe black cuts (avoidable).

It is not that the professional planners do not know or understand their jobs and responsibilities; but it is suspected that undercurrent policy clauses are inserted stealthily by vested groups for private group gains. It is a pity that all the Oppositions have been boycotting the parliament since 1991. Plainly, it is an anti-people posture, for which no excuses are valid enough; albeit the voters could be indirectly responsible for re-voting suspect parties on false promises. The current corrupted environment cannot be cleansed by the politicians. They have to rest for a while for massive sweeper exercise. The political parties cannot use power properly.

**A Husnain, Dhaka**

## Mobilephone

Initially, at least in a substantial number of cases, mobile phone was recognised as a source of anti-social activities. Later, its expansion has been epidemic due to our recent trend of demonstrating prosperity and the mobile being a symbol of it and, also, T&T's inefficiency and inability to provide land phones to all applicants. Despite its widest expansion our government how-

ever has proved its inefficiency and total loss of control. In India, where maintenance of mobile phone in general costs Rs. 200 a month, it costs several hundreds in Bangladesh for the similar use. A recent advertisement in Indian channels shows that Tata's Indicom costs 0123, where 0 indicates no charge between two indicom conversation, Re 1 for talking to other mobiles, Rs 2 for talking to land line, and 3 for talking on STD. It is a pity that due to lack of government control no such provision has been extended in Bangladesh. On the other hand, what is more disgraceful is that no one in the world charges for in-coming calls. Why this anomaly?

Will our government ever take any steps to standardise the call charges following all other countries and stop unreasonable charging for in-coming calls?

**Dr Tasaddoque Hossain**  
Malibag, Dhaka

## Submarine Cable

I'm from Canada. Now I'm studying at the University of Toronto. I'm a regular reader of The Daily Star. But I've not seen any report on the progress of Submarine Cable for months.

I want to know about the progress of this project. So please publish a report on Submarine Cable project and let us know the progress of Bangladesh's gateway to the information highway.

**Aadnan Imtiaz Ahmed,**  
One-mail

## Reporting on ministries

We are disappointed to have observed that so far all the reporting about the performance of the different ministries in the last 4 years of the present government has been negative. It's not all that bad. The way all these reporters have written simply suggests that they are not objective. There are a lot of good work done by the present government which your reporters and columnists do not appear to have recognised. For example, LGED's sanitation campaign, allocation of funds for Union Parishad, appointment of graduate UP secretaries, Education ministry's anti copying campaign, Environment ministry's anti pollution campaign, Drive against food adulteration, Home Ministry's anti terrorism campaign etc should have received due coverage. I suppose reporting should be unbiased and along with the bad sides the good sides of any event

should also be projected. I don't belong to any political group but will definitely vouch that the government of Begum Khaleda Zia is much more committed and more result-oriented than any other government in the past. There are of course a few failures but given our socio-political environment, I suppose the present government's performance is not bad. Small wonder, the finance minister is very vocal about the media reporting!

**NZ Khan, Dhanmondi**

## Footbridge photo

The lead photo of The Daily Star's October 21 issue on the hole in Jatrabari metallic footbridge was a very catchy one. Sincerely speaking, from the first bird's eye view to the picture I apprehended that it was some toy-car near the feet of some minors, then I quickly discovered that it's a death hole for any bridge user.

The area and shape of the hole indicate that it didn't come into being in a few days. Now, will the Dhaka City Corporation discover something from the snap? The hole does not only need to be plugged properly, but also it has to be investigated why and how the hole was created in the thick sheet of metal.

I thank the DS for bringing the matter into public glare.

**Saifuddin Ahmad**  
North Badda, Dhaka

## Random thoughts

I live in Chittagong and was very ill before I flew to Bangkok for a medical checkup on 17th September, 2005. Within hours of my arrival in Bangkok, I had to undergo a major surgery despite my Heat bypass surgery in London in 1989. Surgeons convinced me that there was no way out but to do the surgery to save my life. By the grace of the Almighty, the surgery was a success. I must say, the surgeons did an excellent job. After almost a month of my treatment and convalescing period, I returned home on 16th October.

I must also say that medical treatment and care at the hospital was very good. No wonder I find patients from all over the world at this hospital. As for me, after a two-hour flight from Dhaka or Chittagong, I find a totally different world of kindness and care and at a very moderate charge as compared to Bangladesh and the outside world.

I would like to draw, if I may, attention of the Highest Medical Authorities in Bangladesh to find out why in spite of so many thou-

# WHY OIL PRICE HIKE?

We are told and consoled by our authorities concerned that the prices of fuel petrol, diesel, kerosene and octane have been raised proportionately to the international prices of oil.

Indeed we do not produce petrol, octane, diesel and kerosene and so we import oil from abroad, especially from Middle Eastern Arab countries at an exorbitant price to meet our requirements.

Is it not true that our government has raised the prices of imported oil due to pressure and instruction of the World Bank and the IMF?

Undoubtedly, we import goods, commodities and oil at a higher cost due to various reasons. But what about the prices of our own home made/produced/available goods, commodities and natural resources which we need not import?

Do we require any instruction or dictation from the World Bank or the IMF to fix, increase or decrease the prices of our own goods / commodities / natural resources / ground water and natural gas?

If our government can

raise the prices of imported oil, not produced in our country but imported, why can't our government decrease the rate/price of our underground water, electricity (supplied by WASA, DESA etc) and natural gas which are not imported but produced and available in our own country to mitigate the economic hardships and sufferings of our own people on account of oil price hike?

Following invasion and occupation of Iraq by the US army there have been not only loot and plunder of hundreds of oilfields of Iraq, the third largest oil producing country in the world, by the US President George Bush to meet war expenses, and to please his supporters and Republican Senators but the US capitalists have also captured the world oil market and have taken control of oil of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The US is now the absolute despot of world oil.

The World Bank and the IMF employees are simply charlatans who work at the sweet will of the US President.

We demand of our gov-

and put things right. Whilst I was convalescing at the hospital, many Bangladeshi patients told me harrowing tales of their experiences in various clinics/hospitals in Dhaka.

**Rasul Nizam, Chittagong**

## Non-resident Bangladeshis

The report by your staff correspondence entitled 'Link among scholars will help develop nation' on 16 October was very interesting. The initiative by the New York based website (www.scholarsbangladesh.com) is without doubt a step in the right direction. Mr. Shameem Chowdhury, an expatriate, deserves kudos for the time and effort he has put on it. However, the words of two distinguished scholars during the launch have caught my attention. In their opinion, it seems, the NRIs (Indians) are more patriotic than NRBs. It is hard to establish this case since the present writer has seen, over the years, the skilled and semi-skilled expatriates of Bangladesh origin have been one of the most vocal and organised groups in the West. These dedicated souls have been providing free time and energy to uphold the nation's image since the liberation movement and more recently in the years of terrorism and uncertainty (of course there are some exceptions). Moreover, despite being a new nation (unlike India) our scholars could be found almost all western nations and have been contributing to their respective fields with distinction. However, one must admit that the NRIs have been more successful in building links with institutions back home, academic or non-academic, than NRBs.

In this regard, the Indian Planning Commission and academic institutions in particular play a major part. For example, in the area of economic development (because of this writer's knowledge of the field) there is a concrete guideline in place in India for attracting collaboration from the NRIs. The Indian Planning Commission always searches for right Indian scholars for support either as paid consultants or under non-paid study programmes (research on taxation is an area that immediately comes to mind). I am afraid, I have no knowledge of such a collaborative guideline existing in Bangladesh either in the Planning Commission or in any academic institutions. Contrary to this, over

the years one sees the NRBs have been subject to unfair criticism for being less patriotic.

The time has come to utilise this untapped huge skilled human resources with a minimum cost or even in certain circumstance free of cost.

**Moazzem Hossain**  
Brisbane Australia

## Fasting

Fasting is practised in all the religions. Would some reader or writer enlighten us about the 'fasting' practised in other religions- Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc.

**SN Mamoon, Dhaka**

## Corruption in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has ranked first for the fifth consecutive time in the global corruption rankings published by the Berlin based Transparency International. Even though I have serious doubt about the merit of this kind of rankings, there might be some substance in this ranking to indicate the widespread prevalence of corruption in Bangladesh. It's a known fact among citizens of Bangladesh that most of the government agencies in the country are corrupt and the Transparency International report strengthens that conviction.

Recently, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has denied giving the Bangladesh government extension of time for the separation of the judiciary from the executive branch. This process was started in 1999 on Supreme Court directive and successive governments have failed to accomplish the task even in six years.

I am not a political scientist but in my analysis, there's a direct correlation between the prevalence of widespread corruption in Bangladesh and not having the judiciary separated from executive branch. The reason is obvious - most of the government agencies are corrupt but these agencies are protected by the fact that the judiciary currently is not separate from the executive branch. To be able to achieve a functioning democracy in Bangladesh I think it's necessary for the government now to act to separate the judiciary from the executive branch. Separation of the judiciary from the executive branch will help to establish transparency in governance and establish accountability



# Sachin Dev Burman

October 01 marked the 100th birth anniversary of one of the greatest musicians of modern times, Sachin Dev Burman. Scion of the princely family of Tripura, Sachin Dev Burman popularly known as Sachin Karta amongst the Bengalees and SD Burman in the Bombay film circuit, he developed the art of singing and composing songs which until today remains inimitable. His music breathes of fresh born flowers, his songs nestling places of whistling birds, tinkling bells and sobbing flutes. His orchestral creations contain both lyric and epic sweeps of design blended in such rare harmony which only a composite genius like him was capable of doing. Whether it is Lalmonirhat in Bangladesh or Lahore in Pakistan his music continues to capture the hearts of old and new, despite the fact he left for heavenly abode thirty years ago.

This great man was born in Comilla and lived there until he left for Calcutta for university studies. Here, at Comilla, he and Narzul Islam shared moments of exclusivity to search for resources to create some of the finest Bangla songs. The building where Sachin Karta lived with his father Nawadip Chandra Burman still stands at Chartha Comilla, but alas breaking down, dilapidated, uncared for. And to make things worse, there is a government hatchery functioning in that compound.

Could we request the government to take over the building and declare it as a national heritage and name the Chartha street as Sachin Dev Burman Road. How can we ever forget the man behind "Rangila Rangila Rangila Re", "Nishithey Jaiyo Phulobone", "Baje Tak Dum Tak Dum", "Mono Dilo Na Bodhu" or for that matter the Hindi songs "Thandi Hawaye", "Khoya Khoya Chand", "Dil Dhal Jayen", "Roop Tera Mastana" and so many others in Bangla and Hindi. Is it too much for that much?

**Saiq'a Shabnam**  
Dootabash Road, Baridhara, Dhaka-1212

for the government agencies. It's disheartening to see that a democratically elected government delays a proceeding as important as this.

**Maksood Mohiuddin**  
MBA, University of Georgia  
GA, USA

## Violence in DU campus

Violence on campus creates panic among the students of Dhaka University. The Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and The Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) were involved in a serious fight recently. The situation must change for the benefit of general students.

**Taslim Hasan**  
BBA in Finance  
University of Dhaka

## A heinous crime

I was horrified to see the October 19 story titled "When agony ends in death." It mentioned how an influential person raped 13-year old Amina with the aid of his two accomplices, and then set her on fire three days later. The poor girl fought with her injuries for nearly 10 months before leaving for eternal peace. What's worse is that one of the arrested culprits was set free.

Is there no justice in this country? Is it a crime to be born poor and not to be born into an influential family? How many more innocent children like Amina will be snatched away ruthlessly from their dear ones, and how many more criminals will still stay at large to commit more such heinous crimes?

**Oeshwik Ahmed**  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

## Gulshan Park

The residents of Gulshan-1 were deprived of an open space or a park where the locals could stroll with their families and children. The unauthorised occupants of the DCC, including the sweepers kept the only park of Gulshan-1 (previously known as Children's Park) under their occupancy till very recently. Thanks to the members of the Gulshan Society under the proficient and capable leadership of its president and the relentless support and co-operation of local residents, the park is being finally restored and rebuilt with the helping hand of Rajuk. During the seventies and early eighties this park had its lovely lush greenery, a playground for children and some slides and swings where children could be entertained for hours in the afternoon or evening. There was a nice road that led to the other side of the park. For those of us who preferred to walk, there was a track which led to its surrounding garden. A little closer one could see rows of benches. Both at day and night these were occupied by people and couples. The park was a beautiful place with some large trees with a background that overlooked the Gulshan Lake. It gave an atmosphere of tranquility and serenity. But this park was ruthlessly turned into a haven of criminals and drug addicts. The trees were mercilessly cut down by some unsanctioned people who turned it into a polluted and incapacitated, cramped, filthy slum.

Kudos to the Mayor who extended all possible help to refurbish it for those who deserve it most. It is taking the shape of a tranquil place once again to be filled with peace that once prevailed here.

No physical force was applied to evict the unauthorised occupants which is unprecedented in Dhaka! and it was an endeavour of many.

**Tajul Islam, Gulshan-1**

# Biman's mismanagement



It is embarrassing to read in The Daily Star of October 22, 2005 that Biman could not operate their domestic flights as Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) has refused to supply them the jet fuel as Biman owes hundreds of crores of taka in arrears to BPC. In the recent past, lot of anomalies have been reported in different newspapers highlighting Biman's mismanagement, unionism, corruption, tender manipulation and many more such things. Despite all these serious allegations neither the Biman authorities nor the government did take any action to rid Biman of

these ills. In the absence of proper expertise and strict guidelines, Biman is now in a mess and a burden for the nation. Let us compare Biman with Emirates. One will be surprised to know that Emirates started its journey only in 1985, and today the airline has a fleet of 50 aircrafts. Moreover, in the recently concluded Paris Air Show, Emirates has placed an order worth 19 billions of dollars for purchasing different types of new aircrafts. As for Biman, no comments!

**Humayun Hyder**  
Zigatola  
Dhaka