

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.

# Population boom



The other morning, as I was travelling by a local bus, I came across a shabby, young woman dressed in a dark veil. She had an infant on her lap in addition to two malnourished kids, apparently of the same age. One of the kids was clutching a hen; the woman, the kids, baggage -- all was crammed in one seat. Such a seat is usually meant for a single passenger. The husband, who was standing nearby, clung to the iron-rod attached to the ceiling of the bus. Beside him stood another child, a boy. This is how they travelled.

No doubt, this picture is symbolic of the burgeoning population of our country. Sardine-buses, overcrowded classrooms, city thoroughfares clogged with stagnant traffic--all this substantiates the fact that the situation is

getting out of control. In other words, our population is increasing at a steady rate: 1.42% a year. Needless to say, there is a direct connection between the rapid growth of population and poverty that is very often dubbed as our major problem.

Although the growth rate of population is less than what it was a couple of decades ago, more efforts are required to stem this trend. Unless and until we can turn the populace into human resource, we will remain stuck in the quagmire of poverty. In this regard, the government, among other steps, may reward the single-child families.

**Zabed Wali**  
Pahartali, Chittagong

**Motia Chowdhury's stand**  
I was really shocked at the sudden outburst of Motia Chowdhury for democracy, being herself collectively responsible for destruction of democracy in the country (during

the AL rule). Her concern only created some amusement to the conscious, educated and teeming millions of the country who want to see establishment of a true and people oriented democratic order in the country which will pave the way for the betterment of the people.

The 1.5 million nation is intelligent enough to remember their role during their tenure and, therefore, does not like to see these two again at the helm of affairs.

**Mohammad Ataul Hoque**  
On e-mail

## "Impatient" reformists

It is very amazing to watch how the discredited politicians turned reformists are trying to come out with formulas for inter-party reforms. They have become so impatient that they do not seem to realise that they are knowingly splitting their parties. There is a state of emergency in the country and politics of all sorts are totally banned. The amusing part is that the politicians of the two major political parties are yet to realise that the ball is still in the court of the present interim government.

It is only after the interim government would set forth a roadmap for election and permit open politics that the political parties can reactivate themselves. Meanwhile, whatever the interim government is doing regarding prosecuting the corrupt elements and trying to bring reforms in government departments is being appreciated by the general public. We are looking forward to a complete reform in the working of government departments, particularly the independence of Judiciary, Election Commission and the Anti Corruption Commission. At present we are not interested in whatever inter-party reforms the politicians are after. It is a pity that the media are also raising too much hullabaloo on politicians' move on inter-party reforms.

Lest we forget the past. Here are some facts to ponder. After Ayub Khan came to power in Oct 1958, he banned for five years many prominent politicians including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from taking part in any elections. In 1970 Sheikh Mujib's Awami League won majority seats on an all Pakistan basis. Rest is history. In August 1975, the Awami League was demolished with the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Awami League reassembled and again came to power in 1996 after a lapse of twenty years. The BNP stayed out of parliament for nine years refusing to take part or recognise any elections conducted under the autocratic regime of General Ershad. The BNP was swept into power in 1991 after the downfall of General Ershad. History shows that both the major parties waited for

years to come back to power after being ousted. So why is the hurry now by the so-called reformists?

Let the present interim government do the cleaning which had become essential due to mismanagement and corruption committed by both the major political parties while in power or in opposition.

**Ziauddin Ahmed**

Gulshan, Dhaka

## Smoking on campus

A few years ago, the government framed a law that no one would be allowed to smoke in public places, transports and in the streets. It was a very bold step which was appreciated by all. Smoking is a dangerous habit. It also pollutes the environment. Everybody knows the bad affect of this habit but still they smoke. I don't know why.

There are too many smokers on the BAU campus. The university authorities should address the issue.

**Jewel Rana**

Faculty of Agriculture  
BAU, Mymensingh

## Should political parties be banned?

The article written by the DS Sr. Asst. Editor reflects peoples' views, except the most unscrupulous and most corrupt politicians. Yes, the political parties and politics should be banned for ever. As the Army Chief suggested, we need selective democracy, and not elective democracy. We should not be the copycat of western democracies. Bangladesh must succeed in its own environment with the selective democracy by selecting the best persons to lead and work for this nation on globally competitive and acceptable remuneration.

I strongly suggest that our so called ruling elites be brought down to the realities of BD citizens' life styles and a National Pay Scale evolved, so that competitive salaries can be afforded to all citizens for a justifiable compensation. People should lead a decent life.

**Qamruddin**

On e-mail

## Comments

The analytical article "The 'Confessional statements' and journalistic ethics" written by Mr. Anwarul Kabir

has inspired me to write this short note. Like Mr. Kabir, I am also perturbed by the so called confessional statements made in the secret interrogations by the detained political figures and businessmen, circulated from an unknown source to the media. Even if these confessional statements are true, these should not be exposed to public before trial for the sake of proper judgment in the court as suggested by the Attorney General. So, it is crystal clear that those who have publicised these highly confidential matters have some hidden agenda.

The circumstantial evidences suggest that some vested quarters are actively trying to dismantle the major political institutions of the country. No doubt, most of our political leaders are submerged in corruption. To eradicate corruption, the reformation of political parties is a must. But such reformation must be meaningful and should be carried out by the party activists. This reformation must ensure the internal practice of democracy, transparency in monetary transactions and mutual tolerance. But, unfortunately, to some members sitting at the power centre, the reformation means dislodging Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina from their respective positions.

In this context, my argument is that whether Hasina or Khaleda will stay in their respective positions or not should be decided by their party workers in a democratic manner. Any dictation from the government will jeopardize our sojourn to democracy.

**Saima Akhter**

Department of English  
University of Dhaka

## Sheikh Hasina's arrest

Sheikh Hasina's arrest has not come as a surprise to the country. It has been rumoured for the last few days that both the ladies (Hasina & Khaleda) would be interrogated by JIC. However, as Sheikh Hasina is detained now, the people expect the government to inform the country on what specific allegation she has been arrested. The country wants total transparency and detailed description of the cases

framed against her. The country also expects that Hasina will get a fair trial.

She should be allowed to have the best legal representation with utmost legal coverage as she desires to prove herself innocent.

The judicial dispensation in relation to her case should be very swift and controversy-free.

**AFM Mohiuddin**

Lalmatia, Dhaka

## Attention: NBR

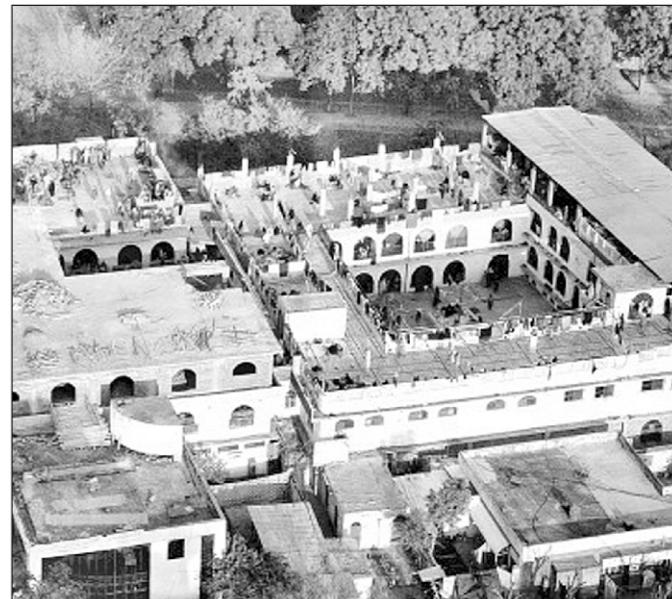
Last year, as you are aware, the

NBR allowed whitening of black money (money earned in illegal ways) through payment of 7.5% tax to the govt.

Don't you think it would be most justified on the part of the NBR to limit the tax to a maximum of 7.5% to whiten the white money (money earned in legal ways) earned in the last five years?

**Acitizen,**  
Dhaka

# Lal Masjid tragedy



The eventful drama at Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) by a section of hard core Islamic fundamentalists was finally over, after hectic maneuvering by Pakistani law enforcing authorities who subdued the highly fortified and well armed Islamic militants of different nationalities. That certainly deserves kudos not only from Pakistani people but also from the people of other peace loving countries.

The mosque drama shows yet another ugly side of the fundamentalists' complex mental state. Taking advantage of educating pupils on Islamic theology, these fundamentalists took self-made Islamic laws in their own hands and unleashed a reign of terror in a nearby town by proclaiming that they are doing these as part of cleansing the society of vices, dishonouring several warnings issued by the concerned authorities.

The Lal Masjid incident deserves outright condemnation.

**Humayun Hyder**

Zigatola, Dhaka

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10X2

10X3