

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.

Floods



All our rivers are flowing from upstream India, Nepal and China and passing through various places, farmlands, villages, cities and towns to fall into the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh experiences floods almost every year and the sufferings of our people, loss of life and property, know no bounds.

Whenever we are affected by floodwater, we become vocal, raise many questions and complaints and come forward with various suggestions, plans and programmes. But as soon as the floodwater recedes, we fall asleep till such time we are attacked by waves of floods again.

Decades of our sufferings and practical experiences teach and remind us as to when and in which month of Bangla or

English calendar floods make our people homeless and cause miseries.

We may divide flood into three periods (A) Pre-floods period (B) On-going flood period and (C) Post-floods period and make the following arrangements and precautionary measures in all districts and upazilas to minimise and mitigate the endless sufferings of our flood affected people.

(A) Pre-floods period: i) Make arrangement for transports, boats and speed boats for transfer of flood affected people to safer places and relief camps. ii) Store sufficient food, pure drinking water and medicines.

(B) On-going flood period: Ensure regular supply of food, pure drinking water and medicines to the flood affected

people.

(C) Post-floods period: Provide relief materials, cash money, bank loans and all help and assistance for rehabilitation of the affected people.

Flood control is a matter of life and death for the 14 crore people of Bangladesh. We cannot sit idle with our hands crossed for an indefinite period. It is imperative that we raise the issue of flood control at the UNO, World Bank and SAARC and other international organisations and seek their help and assistance for the solution of this great and grave economic, financial and humanitarian problem of Bangladesh without further delay.

O. H. Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

Social environment in the LDCs

In a less-developing country, the social pulls have a pattern; mostly negative. Several could be identified by laymen: the strong pull of temptation; the urge to resort to short cuts; subjective decision-making process (especially where public interest is the prime issue).

Notice the systems losses in the civil service (bureaucracy), and in political governance. Even the elected leaders (reps of the people) display weak moral foundations, and the majority resort to non-transparent practices (judging by the large number of anti-corruption cases filed, and the percentages of prosecutions).

The magnitude and depth of unethical practices are staggering - the raping of Sundarbans forest; the vast number of the newly-rich (the sudden change in lifestyles) displaying ostentatious living styles; the frequency of overseas trips by syndicate leaders, in sharp contrast to the low-paid salaries and HR violations of the staff and workers. Misuse of position and powers are basic human weaknesses (even the world's lone superpower practises it!).

These show-offs trickle down to the other layers of the fast changing society, creating social problems and disparities. We seem to have no respect for discipline and the rule of the law—the upper layers of the society appear to be impervious to calls for moral discipline. Imagine the cumulative effects of such style of living on the new and young generation—note the cascading effect of criminal acts and use of violence.

At the moment who are vociferous about early elections—those who are deprived from non-stop looting of the assets of the nation. Why and how dynasty rule flourishes? Denial of democratic practices. The monetary caste system is still prevalent in the rich West. Car, rickshaw, or walk? Count the increase in private cars on the city roads—the official policy is that the pedal rickshaws create congestion. The road tax on private automobiles should be raised by several times (calculate the percentage compared to the capital cost of a large car).

One wonders whether a peaceful revolution could eradicate the entrenched evil practices. The present deterrent punishments are not enough.

Alif Zabr, Dhaka

Cleft lip and palate

I had very little idea about cleft lip

and palate. One day, my mother informed me that in Dhaka Community Hospital, where she works as a Gynecologist, a team from Australia comes to treat people with cleft lip and palate. Then she explains briefly about cleft lip and palate. Cleft lip is a condition in which somebody is borne with the upper lip split. But cleft palate is more severe and painful. It is the same condition but the person is borne with the roof of the mouth split, making them unable to speak clearly. Then, she told me that it is one of the important cases in Bangladesh and I went to the hospital to see it.

On the ground floor of the hospital, I saw the Australian team with pictures on the notice board. The name is 'Aussie Bangla Smile Team' and they have flown from Australia to form smile in Bangladesh's face. The team includes:

- 1) Steven Arthur Cooper- Doctor Anesthetist
- 2) Barbara Maureen Hitchell- Registered nurse/ Midwife
- 3) Frances Margaret- Registered nurse
- 4) Judith Barlow- Registered nurse
- 5) Fadia Khalic- Registered nurse
- 6) Angela Brady- Anesthetic nurse
- 7) Dr. Hasan Sarwar- Surgeon

They, along with some other local surgeon, started fixing the patients with cleft lip and palate from 16th October to 20th October. They have selected about 50 patients from different place to operate free of cost based on need and financial condition.

Then my mother took me on the operating floor where I saw two cleft lip patients waiting for their operation and later a boy with cleft palate. It was really unspeakable to observe the patients. Their guardians informed me that their children's cleft lip and palate is from their birth but later on a doctor added that it can also occur from infection and burning. One man was telling that there are many people who have cleft lip and palate but they are embarrassed to reveal their face in front of the society and sometimes they are offended for this disease. For my mother, I was privileged to visit the operation theatre (O.T.) and Chief Medical Adviser Dr. Barua guided me. The team handles three operations patients simultaneously. I witnessed them undergoing critical surgery and handling everything very cautiously. In an operation, I saw a surgeon sewing the clefted lip of a patient.

Before leaving the O.T, I thanked Dr. Barua and those involved in surgery for providing me with such

a wonderful experience. Then my mother beckoned me upstairs where I met all the patients who have come from the O.T. to recover. Everyone has a bulging lip due to the effect of local anesthesia and a firm stitch. The guardians were smiling and thanked Dhaka Community Hospital for taking such initiatives. It seemed that they have got their lost life back.

This was a very successful campaign by the whole team. More than fifty individuals have been benefited and I thank all of them for their strong effort. Around three hundred thousand people are suffering from this disease; so the government must raise funds in order to finance such operations, especially for the poor, as it is very expensive. Likewise, newspapers and television channels would also need to come forward and inform people more about this disease.

MD. Sakib Niaz
Malibagh, Dhaka

Dismal scenario

A considerable time has passed before I took up the pen again. But what could I write? I am so disheartened by the situation all over the world.

Violence is erupting in many countries causing loss of innumerable lives and injuring many, crimes have become rampant, natural calamities are striking many countries.

A devastating forest fire is raging in California, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes are affecting many countries. Rain caused havoc in many parts of our country. The effect of global warming is beginning to show and we don't know what will happen if nothing is done to mitigate it; we are afraid to think about it.

Former US Vice President Al Gore has received Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to make people aware about the destruction which

will result from global warming. We congratulate him for his noble endeavour.

The countries should become united to combat this, otherwise this planet will be in a perilous situation.

NurJahan
Chittagong

DSE Index

The Dhaka Stock Exchange has created a new record both in General Index and volume of money. The DSE General Index reached 2901.69296 marks on a particular day and the total transaction was Tk 316.84 crore for the first time in the 51-year history of the country's premier bourse. On October 12 last, the DSE General Index reached 2802 mark. Before the Eid vacation many people assumed that share prices could fall in DSE after the Eid vacation due to the huge selling spree, but a reverse situation followed. The reality is totally different. The trend of onrush to invest in the country's capital market should be maintained properly and it will surely give due benefit to the overall economic development of the nation. But, above all, one thing should be kept in mind that without judging the fundamentals of the company, the investors should not invest.

Creating consciousness and awareness among the investors is the primary duty of the DSE.

Bazlur Rahman
Fellow of London Business School
UK

Hannan Shah's stand

Mr Hannan Shah, the present BNP coordinator, has publicly vowed that if he cannot get his leader released from jail through the judicial process, he will get her out by any means. What did he mean by "any means"? Does he want to take the country back to the pre-Jan 11 situation? Does he want to mean that Begum Khaleda Zia, his party leader, is above the law and cannot be brought to justice? What if she had committed crimes while she was in power?

His assertion indicates that his BNP wants to start street agitations, call hartals, break the iron gate and take her out by 'any means'. If this is the mentality of these so-called leaders, is there any chance to free this country from corruption? If Begum Zia comes out without facing any trial, will people ever know whether she was clean or dirty?

Mr. Hannan Shah, please read the lips of people this time around and allow the law to take its own course. We, the people of Bangladesh, want a corruption free country, please do not try to mislead people. We are not with you at all.

I am not talking only about Begum Khaleda Zia, I am talking about everybody, irrespective of his/her party affiliations.

Shafiqul Islam
One-mail

Fibre-optic network

The belated (due to the ossified mentality of the policy makers) implementation of the long waited fibre-optic network connecting the country with the world-wide information superhighway is not producing the desired results due to frequent disconnection in the

Cox's Bazar-Chittagong leg. According to knowledgeable people, this is happening mainly due to sabotage because some interested quarters do not want Bangladesh to reap the benefits of the lucrative worldwide IT market.

The contract for laying of the Cox's Bazar-Chittagong leg of the fibre-optic line was reportedly awarded to a contractor in exchange of a handsome amount of money paid to influential people at the fag end of the last political government.

To ensure safety of the fibre-optic line, the authorities may consider using the electricity towers of the national grid. This step, if implemented, will protect the fibre-optic line from sabotage as well as minor natural calamities.

Abu Abdullah
Karwan Bazar, Dhaka

Power of youth

The cover story, "Online social networking" in the Star Campus (21 Oct 2007) is a timely issue featuring the ever-growing online social network community. The three pieces by Mahdin Mahboob, Sarah ZH, and Binoy Barman introduce readers to this recent phenomenon. Unfortunately, in none of the three pieces there's any reference to groups and causes related to Bangladesh.

Bangladeshis are slowly and gradually making their presence felt in these networks. I'm not a 'net generation' as Barman terms the youth. I don't see anything wrong with the youth in experimenting with the Internet. After meeting this wonderful 'net generation' recently, I can only see and envy the vast potential the 'net generation' has in letting the world know the good things of Bangladesh.

Asrarul Chowdhury
Department of Economics
Jahangirnagar University

Thanks...

Thank you so much for printing my cry of anguish concerning the privations of being a sub-tenant of one of the largest and most prestigious property companies in Gulshan. I had hoped that renting one of their flats would have proved an asset, especially after 5 visits by me to their head office and one by my excellent landlady.

In the gap between my writing and your printing my letter, I am glad to say that the mystery of the absence of hot water in the wall shower above the bathroom-taps-and-hand-shower has been solved by one of their staff (obviously used to the standards) pointing out that, if one swung the handle in the opposite direction to that indicated, the hot water eventually arrived. Silly of me to assume that the direction would be the same as the handle just 2 feet below it.

I continue to marvel that those paying workmen do so before they have checked that the work has been done properly. I would have thought that it was a basic rule of life that those who pay bills have to be more intelligent than those who present them.

Some years ago, at a frightfully posh 'do', I met a delightful young foreigner who had just arrived to build the 'Westin'. He looked rather startled when I advised him to throw a bucket of water over each

bathroom floor to check that the water went in the right direction before he paid for the nice tiles to go down.

Well, at least we know that the Pakshi Bridge is unlikely to fall down. The Consultant Engineer a noble Brit was up at 2.00am to check the quality of the cement going into the uprights.

But how long will it take for such precautions to become part of the basic routines in these parts? I suspect it will only happen when Top Managers do not consider such basic matters to be beneath their attention.

Angela MV Robinson
Gulshan, Dhaka

Top leaders

Barrister Rafiqul Hui, an outstanding lawyer of the country, has made an excellent and timely observation that Sheikh Hasina, top leader of the Awami League and Khaleda Zia, Chairperson of the BNP, should abandon the idea of holding the post of future prime minister and at the same time retaining the post of chairperson of the respective parties.

In fact, this was the voice of general public of the country and most of the party men of their own.

Unfortunately, they could not realise the truth to decide their future course of action and destiny as well.

Even now, time is there and they should listen to the voice of people

and writings on the wall.
Kumar Prithwiraj Nath
Toronto, Canada

Hilsa production

The other day I read from a newspaper that the recent measures taken by the govt. to prevent "jatka" catching has increased "Hilsa" production by about eighty thousand MT (Metric Ton). The value of this extra fish in dollar is roughly about 400 million. If we take the price of a Kg. of fish to be 5 dollars. If a wholehearted effort is made to increase the "Hilsa" fish production by taking various measures like imposing ban on fishing during breeding season, total ban on "jatka" catching, increasing and protecting breeding ground, effectively checking smuggling, controlling pollution of rivers, especially the breeding fields and controlling the net size, we can double the "Hilsa" production.

The annual "Hilsa" yield is around 250-280 thousand MT which, if doubled, will enable us to export 250 thousand metric tons and earn about a billion dollars annually. The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock may kindly look into matter and explore this hidden treasure.

I think the "Hilsa" will be almost a no-investment, environment-friendly wealth of Bangladesh, which God has given us free.

Commodore AMA Alam (Retd.) BN
New DOHS, Dhaka

Al Gore



Heartfelt felicitations to Al Gore and the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for winning the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. The former vice president used the term global warming as "the greatest challenge ever faced."

Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth," a documentary on global warming, won the Academy Award this year. He had been widely expected to win the prize and the anticipation came true finally when he won it. Hats off to him! The world would have been different had he been elected as the US President in 2000.

Munna Hasib
English Teacher
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Mayhem in Pakistan



Pakistan, the land dominated by the military and the mullahs, has made news for wrong reasons. The return of the daughter of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto has sparked a blow-up that left as many as hundred people killed.

Extremity of any sort—be it religious or secular—is something that only complicates an already volatile political situation. But the simple logic of

live and let live is something that is often disregarded and brutally trampled in the political arena. And this trend is a common thing in the underdeveloped countries of the world. A cursory glance through the history of some of these countries—say Pakistan or Ivory Coast—will substantiate the fact.

In all probability, the people who got

killed did not have any idea of their tragic fate. However the fact remains that the event was unfortunate and uncalled for. Why should people die in scores for no fault of theirs? This question will boggle any sane mind. We hope that the situation will come back to normal in no time.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

BCS Administration

While waiting for more than 37 years for the judicial separation, we observe that the BCS (Administration) is strongly opposing the implementation of Supreme Court's decision and even has threatened to strike. The whole nation has certainly been hurt, shocked and astonished by their movement. It is really funny, silly, unacceptable and immoral, isn't it? I strongly think it is, for the following reasons.

I. BCS (Admin) organised a seminar at BIAM and demonstrated a very strong protest against the implementation of judicial separation. Obviously, it is totally unexpected in context of time and tide for the separation of the judiciary, while the whole nation is waiting to celebrate 1st November. You are really too late! Were you sucking your thumbs? Nevertheless, most hopefully we are going to have a separate (semi-independent) judiciary by only a week's time! But our nation has been defrauded and beaten by our patriotic leaders (?) for more than 36 years on this issue. So, 1st November is going to be a pretty great moment for our nation, undoubtedly.

II. I could not but mention some comments made in that seminar by our intellectuals. One of them said, "The recommendations made for the separation is a fraud." We know

that those recommendations are finalised and scrutinised by the Supreme Court. Doesn't his comment suggest that the court has done something wrong? Again he has messed up the concept of state and independence of judiciary saying that "The state is undivided so the concept of independent judiciary can not be sustained". I have doubt about his concept of state mechanism. He should understand that for enjoying civil, political and social rights, an independent judiciary is a condition and it does not weaken the state, rather makes it healthy and wealthy. Finally he said, "Implementation should withhold unless an elected government implements it and Parliament should decide this issue". It cast doubt whether he has a sound idea about our Parliament where most of the culprits get together to chat for their own cause. I strongly believe they will never ever do that. So no more delay, every good thing is to be done just now while those evils are out of pitch!

Finally, it should be clear to everybody that the Supreme Court is the guardian of our constitution and even an elected Parliament cannot overrule or disobey any decision of this court. Therefore, everyone has to comply with the decision regarding separation of judiciary from the executive.

M Humayun Kabir (Pallab)
Student, City University, London