

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.

Food shortage



PHOTO: STAR

The government has already declared that it is not possible for it to make the situation stable by importing food grains. I would request the government to activate the TCB immediately and import the essential food items. I think the government can deduct less important projects from the ADP. We are mostly dependent

on India, so they get an opportunity to raise the prices of essential items.

We must look for alternative sources to buy rice and other essential items.

Mohammad Anisur Rahman

Abdul Gani Road, West Jharnapara
Pahartali, Chittagong

Bangladeshi politics

Your article "Of people and politicians" by S. I. Zaman dated March 11, 2008 depicted an accurate picture of traditional Bangladeshi politics. What the article lacked is putting proportional blame on the CTG and the media for failing to keep the pressure on, to change the so-called traditional politics of Bangladesh. The politicians who initiated some needed political reforms should have been given support, irrespective of their motive. In light of the fate befallen on the dissident voices during the autocratic rule of the two Begums, these politicians should have been given the benefit of doubt for their silence prior to 1/11. Instead, they faced corruption charges by ACC and were ridiculed by the media. Who in their correct state of mind would take the risk of antagonising these two powerful Begums and incur the wrath of their supporters if they do not get any leeway now? No wonder, quality and quantity of reformers are going down rapidly.

We needed to change the politics and the first and foremost step should be cleaning the heads ('fish stinks from the head' metaphor). But we failed measurably. Even, a straight talking ex-adviser who was justifiably vocal against the pre 1/11 politics was stripped off his post, mostly to meet demands of these so called traditional politicians and the media, which support them. What message are we giving to the feeble reformists within the parties? How will there be any change in Bangladeshi politics now or in future?

S. Khan
New York, UK

Pakistani journalist

It made me sad when I went through Mr. Abdul Mohsin's letter entitled "Pakistani Journalist" published in The Daily Star on

21st March, 2008.

Before saying a few words on the issue, I would like to thank Mr. Abdul Mohsin for bringing into our notice the point through his nice letter. I also agree with him on this point. I came to know that the private TV channel ATN Bangla on 21st February at its 7:00pm news broadcast the comment of Pakistani columnist Mr. Ikram Sehgal to the effect that the Language Movement of 1952 was responsible for not only the current political turmoil in Pakistan but also for the separation of Bangladesh from Bangladesh.

Through this letter I would like to ask Mr. Ikram Sehgal how he could make such a comment about our Language Movement of 1952 as well as our separation from our Pakistan. Did you forget the history? Echoing the voice of Mr. Mohsin I would like to know "how is the Language Movement of 1952 responsible for the events taking place in Pakistan, 56 years later?" It seems that the Pakistani elites the politicians, the civil and military bureaucrats, the businesspeople, the academicians and the journalists like Mr. Ikram Sehgal will never learn to admit the truth.

I would also like to know why ATN Bangla sent its reporter to interview a Pakistani journalist like Ikram Sehgal. Why? Will any Pakistani TV channel or newspaper send a reporter to interview any Bangladeshi intellectual or journalist to comment on this issue? Or have they ever done so?

Through this letter I would like to appeal to the pro-liberation forces of Bangladesh: please denounce the comments of Mr. Ikram Sehgal.

Abdur Razzaque Khan
PhD candidate
Journalism and Media Studies
Centre
The University of Hong Kong

"Abuse" of patriotism

How patriotic are we--staring from the top tier of political leadership? Why we need, first, the neutral non-political caretaker government for conducting the general elections; and now, we are under the umbrella of emergency governance, monitored by the armed forces? Some basic traits of nobility and character are missing from our daily lives (starting with the core philosophy of life traits). Why do we patronize unfiled leaders?

Like babies and children, we all are the products of our environment (moral, spiritual, geographical, cultural, and the company we live in and mix with). Note that the style of governance affects all citizens, and is an important social factor which has to be monitored by the government, to keep all of us on track. How much we respect monitoring and maintenance -- beyond the equipment level? Machines act as programmed; but humans have the divine freedom of using discretion -- the eternal bug.

Who/what have let us down? Avarice and human frailties? What are we doing about it -- after three decades of freedom? Independence from what? The brokers of leadership have no freedom today -- even decline local medical treatment outside the jail! What has happened to the swadeshi syndrome? What type/kind of preachers we need? The microphone is not a universal solvent. Oratory is being misused. The gift of the gab displays disloyalty to morals and to the voters. Why/how the voters are taken for a ride; or dismounted? Who are asking for quick elections? Will revenge politics come back with a vengeance?

Today society is floating like kochuripana (water hyacinth). There are tides in nations, societies, and in individuals. Where is the master plan for reducing the accumulated systems losses? Ekushey February period is the right time for introspection. We have to shun

emotionalism and face ugly realities. Why we prefer street agitation, and not interview the heart deep inside us? Show off, or check our inner specifications? The future lies with the voters.

AMawaz
Dhaka

Truth commission

The government has decided to set up a truth and accountability commission to prevent the corrupt persons from participating in any election and holding public offices.

The generals of Pakistan made the same accountability commission with the same purpose. But the so called corrupt people have come back to power. So we support trying corrupt people, but would request the CTG not to do anything that sets bad examples for the future generation.

Jakir-Al-Faruki
Jessore

Collared tigers

I am writing in response to the letter you published from Mr. Ronald Halder (19 March) concerning the radio-collaring of tigers in the Sundarbans. I am the producer of the BBC film 'Ganges: Waterland' to which Mr. Halder refers and I want to point out some of the gross inaccuracies in his letter:

1. There is no evidence whatsoever in the film to suggest any neglect or malpractice towards the tigers which were collared. In my dealings with Adam Barlow I have always found him to be an extremely conscientious and professional scientist. The collaring operation which I witnessed was extremely well-planned and carried out with great expertise. The well-being of the tiger was always Adam's paramount consideration.

2. To suggest that we filmed a dead tiger and claimed it was alive is a flagrant and disgraceful untruth. I know for a fact that the tiger which I saw being darted walked away into the forest after waking and was seen alive several times over the next couple of days. What happened to it after the observers left the area is speculation. I can confirm, however, that the tiger's teeth were extremely broken. The resulting inability to eat would, in my opinion, account for the fact that the tiger was very thin.

3. We do not show a collar being removed from a very sick tiger in the film. Once again, this allegation is simply not true.

Dan Rees
One-mail

Shibir at Shaheed Minar!

It's deeply disheartening to learn that RU students have been forced to see Shibir, student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami which is the most blatant anti-liberation element in the country, observing the Independence Day at the Shaheed Minar.

How does it feel when I have to see my father's death anniversary being observed by his very killers?

I want to convey a message to Shibir men through DS - no matter how much you distort our history of independence hiding your predecessors' heinous acts of mass murder and rape, sooner or later our young generation of today and tomorrow will be enlightened and your desperate attempts to gain ground will be foiled. Do you know why? Truth prevails in the long run - a maxim you preach but don't follow.

There must be a limit to hypocrisy!

A sympathetic student
DU

To the CA...

I want to thank your office and especially you for giving the Independence Day Award to the late Prof. GC Dev; it was long due and you did an excellent job to free us from the guilt of forgetting an eminent son of the soil, an intellectual and above all a fine human being.

In my undergraduate student years I used to reside at Rokeya Hall, so I had the chance to see him walking in the afternoon in front of his residence, always a happy face!

If you allow me I would make one suggestion about the next year's award. Please see for yourself the 25th March issues of newspapers Samakal (front page) and Prothom Alo and read about one Dr. Mozammel Hussain (M. Hussain) who did the audio recording of military (Pakistani) atrocities perpetrated on innocent citizens of our country on 25 March 1971.

He is teaching Physics at University of Zambia and his permanent residence is B-174, Khilgaon Chowdhury Para, Dhaka 1219 (Tel. 7216814).

Once again I appreciate your honouring GC Dev.
Prof. Monira Hossain
Dean
School of Education
Bangladesh Open University

Missing rail safety

The news is not only alarming but also indicates how desperate and diverse our enemies can be.

We think the government should arrange public hearing in the adjacent areas to gather public perception of the incident.

Areader
One-mail

Crisis of confidence

The question whether national election will be held within December 2008 has raised doubts in the public mind. It is true that the Chief Adviser, the Chief Election Commissioner and the Army Chief strongly reconfirmed time and again the government's plan to hold the election on or before December 2008. Nevertheless, it's not easy to assume that things are moving according to the so called 'Roadmap' designed by the EC. Some of our national political leaders demanded announcement of a date of election to create an environment of trust. Will a declaration of election date put an end to the prevailing confusion and distrust?

No one can deny that the majority of our population don't believe that the election will be held as promised by the government.

A.K. Azad
One-mail

Rickshaws in the city

This is in response to Mr. Mohammed Rahat's letter titled "Rickshaws in the city", dated Sunday, March 3, 2008. He refers to the problem of rickshaws plying freely in the streets of Dhaka wreaking havoc within the city's traffic.

He also mentioned that rickshaws must be "eliminated" from Dhaka metropolitan city in a quick and systematic manner. I believe that such a thought is highly unrealistic because the people who pull those rickshaws need to make their own living. And even if they do pull rickshaws, they can barely make ends meet. Simply put, a rickshaw puller's life is hard.

Why do they pull rickshaws in the first place? That's because they can't find any jobs in their villages. They move to Dhaka city in the hope that they can find jobs and lead a better life. But their hopes are dashed by the reality of the overall Bangladesh economy. So they end up pulling rickshaws.

Yes, I know very well that there are more rickshaws than people in many areas of Dhaka, and this is a result of failed economic policies (if there were any) in Bangladesh. Not the rickshaw pullers themselves.

The realistic thing to do is to limit the number of rickshaws being manufactured. And implement sound economic policies, so that Bangladesh can develop as a whole.

Another point I want to make is that "eliminating" a problem will create other problems in different forms. So it is best to see the whole picture and try to solve the problem rather than to "eliminate" it.

Farzand Ahmed
Bangkok, Thailand

Film star's death

Film star Manna who dominated the country's cinema as a hero for more than two decades died of a heart attack very recently. His death was a complete shock to the cinema industry as well as millions of his fans.

I was not a movie fan but I used to see glimpses of his movies or songs on television. He was truly a legend. I got his death news when I was coming from a long trip and on my way I received the news which made me speechless for a while.

A man with no movie background came and ruled the industry for more than two decades. It's something he never dreamed of. He won the hearts of millions of Bangladeshis by playing the hero fighting against corruption in around 200 films since making his screen debut in 1985.

His sudden demise was a great loss to Bangladesh's film industry. He was the king and will remain a king to his fans. Let us not forget the contribution he made to the Bangladesh film industry.

Hasib
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Why this negligence?

I have read a special feature by Hana Shams Ahmed entitled 'Accident or negligence.' It's about a girl named Afia. After reading the feature I have understood that the negligence of doctors and the diagnostic centre were responsible for her death.

So, it is obvious why so many people go abroad for treatment. The doctors must give a better account of themselves.

Numan Chowdhury
North Hall
Dhaka College

Crime against humanity

Five years have passed since the US started the unjust war against Iraq. I was listening to BBC World Service a few days back. A twelve year old boy was interviewed. He said, "I woke up as usual. But this day was different because I was waken by the sounds of US jet fighters which were throwing missiles on my motherland. In this war I lost my father, my uncle, my two legs and of course my good days". The tale of this unfortunate boy was so tragic that I couldn't but weep. This is one of the many unfortunate tales. No one can deny that in the name of war against terrorists, the US is violating human rights in Iraq. This is nothing but injustice.

Unfortunately, a large number of innocent children and common people are the victims of this unjust war.

Mushfique Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University
Bangladesh

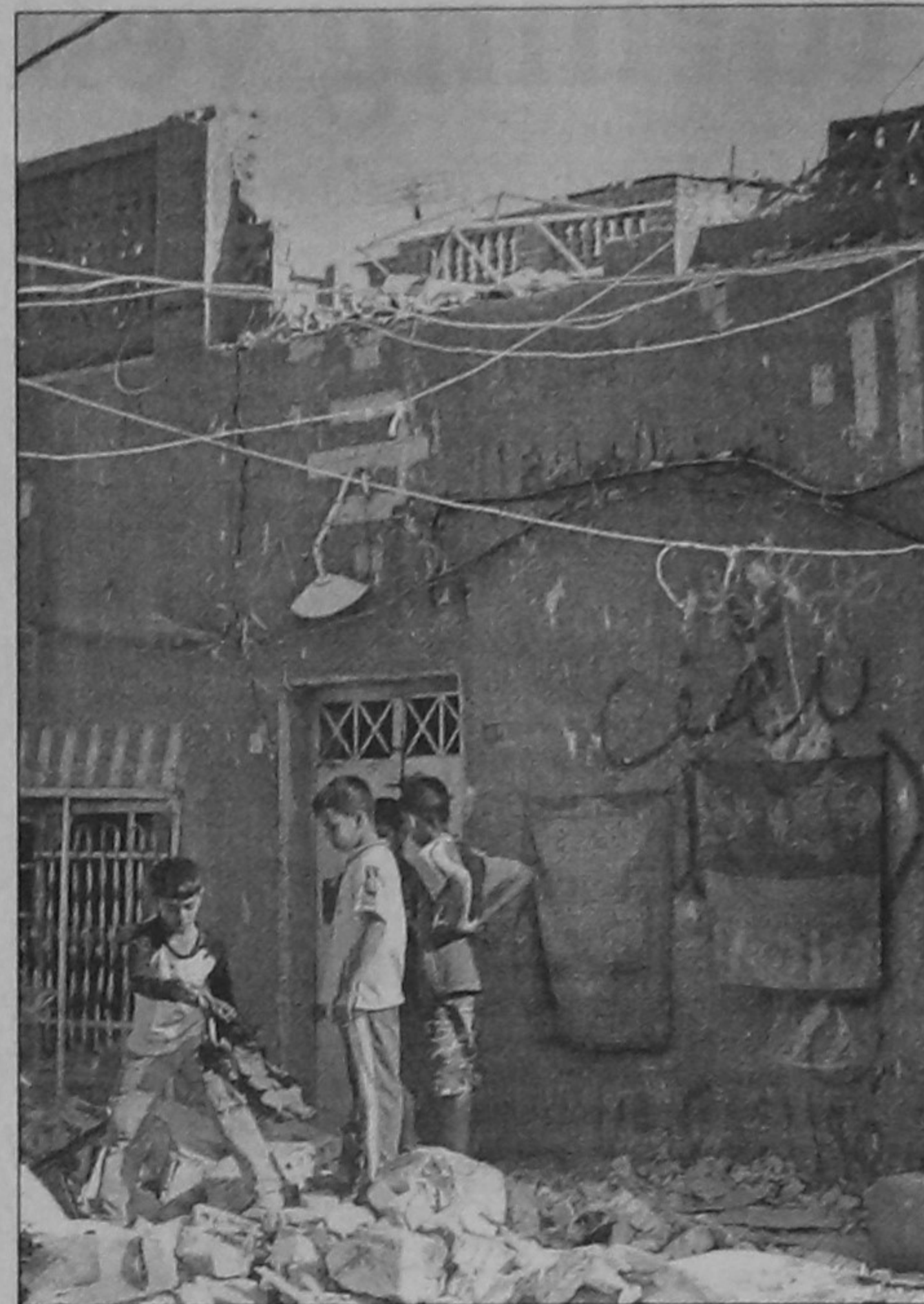


PHOTO: AFP

City Centre crack

We are very concerned about the City Centre crack. The relevant authorities should be made accountable, irrespective of the backgrounds of the person(s) in charge of design, contract awarding, construction and those responsible for regular and routine supervision.

We hope a transparent inquiry process will be initiated and the report made public without wasting any more time.

Areader
One-mail

We are shocked

Once again, 25th March is here to remind me of the nightmare, my friends and I had experienced in Dhaka Medical College Hostel (Now Dr. Fazle Rabbi Hall). I have no intention to recount that, nor do I intend to retrace our course of action thereafter, 37 years ago. But, our hearts bleed, when we see that those who continued with their normal activities under General Yahya Khan, and under Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan in the then government of Pakistan and that of the then East Pakistan, are at the helm of affairs again today.

We feel outraged, when we see someone has found it a matter of corruption when some people have donated funds for the Foundation named after the man, who refused to be the Prime Minister of Pakistan in lieu of sacrificing our rights. We feel it was a mistake for Bangabandhu to court arrest on that night and to leave his family behind at great risk, his most favourite daughter gave birth to her first born in captivity. She is captive today too!!!

I wonder, if it was wrong for the then Maj. Ziaur Rahman to have left his young wife and minor child behind and to leave to command the Z-Force of the liberation struggle, his young wife and the child were later captured by the Pakistanis and were confined in the cantonment. She is captive today

too!!!

We are further outraged to see in various TV channels a comic song where footage of arrest of Bangabandhu's daughter and that of the wife of Zia are shown with great fanfare. This is the revenge, of what you may ponder. We call upon the TV channels to stop broadcasting this song.

But we, freedom fighters, are always the dream merchants, it is time that the Sector Commanders and other freedom fighters must take over democratically, guide this country and infuse the spirit of liberation, and remove all the legacies of the colonial era. Better late, than never.

A Freedom Fighter of 1971
One-mail

Attention: BTRC

I got an email below a few hours back, from a Bangladeshi VoIP phone service provider to its customer about the service disruption.

Now the question to BTRC, if they really want to start Call Centre business which requires Redundancy of our Undersea Cable, how will they make it happen with BTB management for our only Undersea Cable? I want BTRC to answer this question before they promote Call Centre in Bangladesh.

Compare this with Sri Lanka and Pakistan, which have had problems only once each in the past five years. Redundancy is a key question for Bangladesh and BTB.

Sayed Rahman
One-mail

No more media exploitation

Presentation of women in many TV commercials in a derogatory manner has brought to the forefront the issue of exploitation of women by the media. A good number of write-ups by renowned columnists, personalities and even by the readers have already appeared on the different leading dailies with

regard to this issue. But as far as I'm concerned, a crucial point that can be very effective in order to address this has been missing all the way.

Whenever an ad of a company turns out to be sexist, we vehemently come down on that company. But should we ignore the fact that society can't be fully free of exploitative elements and so there's always a chance, be it little or great, of being exploited? Companies are always there on the lookout for making money by hook or by crook and no doubt, this practice on the part of advertising companies is utterly reprehensible. Nevertheless, at the same time women should guard themselves from being exploited. Performers must exercise caution and use their own intellect while scrutinizing the script of an ad, especially whenever it comes to ads of cosmetics products. Models performing in sexist ads must be brought under severe criticism and this way they can be discouraged to perform this kind of role. If women themselves don't agree to perform in sexist ads and are not sold, exploitative companies will be left with no choice but giving up this policy. This can be an effective way for getting rid of media exploitation.

After all, it's better to look at our faults before blaming others.

Ahmad Ferdous Bin Alam

Department of CSE, DU

School bus

Needless to say, there is traffic jam in each and every road of the greater Dhaka city, especially where the schools are located. While the children from affluent families use cars to come to the school, the same is not true about the majority of them.

So, I would appeal to the authorities concerned to make it mandatory that every school will have its own bus. This will take some pressure off the parents unable to provide transport to their children.

W. Islam
Uttara, Dhaka

Love for birds



PHOTO: SHAFIQ ALAM

My family and I live in New York and were deeply moved by the story entitled, "An instance of love for birds" published in The Daily Star on March, 21, 2008, which described the humane acts of some of the students of the Dhaka University, namely, Tapan Kumar Gope, Aniruddha, Palash and Viki of Jagannath Hall and Dipendu and Arnab of Fazlul Haq Hall, in saving the lives of 160 stray kites that had fallen from trees near the Jagannath Hall following a storm.

Their acts are dazzling testimonies to kindness towards animals and birds. I believe it was Ram Krishna, a great sage, who had said, "Jeebey doya korey jei jon, shei jon shebiche Isshore" or, one who shows kindness to animals (all creatures) is really serving the Creator. These young students of Dhaka University must be commended for it.

I would like to reach these students to thank them, and will be grateful if anyone can let me know how to contact them. I can be reached by email at makbar@aol.com, or by telephone -- 917-400-8124.

M. Akbar, On e-mail

Smelly and dirty water

For the last one-month or so we the residents of Siddheswari area are being supplied with smelly and somewhat muddy-looking water for our daily consumption.

We brought the matter to the notice of local Wasa authorities but there was no improvement in the quality of water supplied. We even cleaned up the underground reservoir as well as the over-head water tank, yet the bad smell and the dirty colour of the water persist.

It may be mentioned that Wasa realises 15% Vat along with water charges from all of us. I wonder what value addition it does to the river water, which presumably it supplies to us! We are worried about the effect of consuming such dirty water continuously.

We sincerely hope the Wasa authorities will urgently look into this problem.

Abul Mohsin
Siddheswari, Dhaka

