

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 explosion

One hundred forty million people in one hundred forty-seven thousand square kilometres of land is beyond the carrying capacity of the land by any measure. The density of 950 persons per square kilometre is unprecedented in this earth. Land, ecology, climate and society are vitiated and becoming unliveable with an expanding sea of humans. But there is still no let up. Every day 5500 new mouths are added to the existing stock of people, leading to

around 22 lakh additional humans each year. The annual budget is not concerned with population activities, though this is the number one problem of Bangladesh. Our development focus, governmental attention, NGO activities should now prioritise population planning activities rigorously to save Bangladesh from catastrophic consequences. Prof. SAM
On e-mail



Shocked O Level examinees

It was the last day of O Level exams of my daughter. We the parents were waiting anxiously outside the exam hall. We expected a happy face coming out of the venue as she was confident of her last day subject, which was accounting.

We saw the students coming out with very perplexed and sad faces, some of them crying. Not understanding what was actually happening, we got a little worried. Our daughter was still to come out of the hall. A discussion among the students already out of the hall indicated that something went terribly wrong with the exam, or rather the question paper. Finally, I saw my daughter's face and drew my husband's attention to her crying.

To our utter dismay, we learnt that the format and mark structure of the accounting paper was completely different from what was expected by the students!

Upon queries from different school authorities, we learnt that according to Edexcel syllabus and mark structure the format of the accounting paper till the year 2008 stands as below:

Section A - 2 questions carried 24 marks each - 24 x 2 = 48
Section B - 4 questions carried 13 marks each - 13 x 4 = 52
Total marks : 48 + 52 = 100 marks. Duration 3 hours.

But the exam was taken on 200 marks with the same 3-hour duration! The students were faced with a great challenge and were shocked.

In May 2008 the question paper was prepared with 6 problems.

In Section A, each problem carried 48 marks and in Section B each carried 26 marks - 48 x 2 = 96 and 26 x 4 = 104.

Why was this so? Why were the schools and institutions not informed of any change? How could this change take place without any prior notice?

Further information reveals that one of the renowned schools has taken up the matter with the overseas authorities. It is our legal right as school authorities, teachers and parents to seek redress to this kind of unfair imposition of rules, that too without giving any information beforehand.

Aparent
On e-mail

Buriganga

A few days ago I was reading an article in a daily newspaper that the land grabbers are again filling up a portion of the Buriganga illegally. What is our government doing about it? The country is going through a state of emergency but the "land grabbers" are still very active.

We cannot let this happen. The wanton acts of land grabbing should be stopped and it is also the duty of the ordinary citizens to step forward to help the law enforcers. Minhaj Ahmed
Utara, Dhaka

Prison break and negligence

The prison break at Chuadanga starkly contrasts the skill and capabilities of the prisoners compared to the inefficiency of the prison authorities. However the authorities' capability to pass the buck on is nothing short of remarkable!

Fascinating is the IG Prison's statement published in your daily on May 17th. He rushed to Chuadanga and quickly found that the poor quality of construction enabled the prisoners to make a hole through the wall noiselessly!

He had nothing to say about the efficient(?) prison guards and the prison authorities that allowed this to happen. What were the prison guards and their supervising officials doing while the prisoners could make a hole in the prison wall and get out? Possibly cart-napping on duty or even staying in their quarters, who knows! After all, the hole could not be made in a few minutes or in an hour or two! Was there no trace of connivance between the prisoners and the prison-keepers?

All this will be kept hidden from the public eye as highly confidential and treasured state secrets!

As usual PWD is the fall guy, accused post-facto of diluting cement (the costliest building material), and the benefits shared between the contractors and PWD officials, making both the parties cash rich!

Power failure is another excuse to pass on the blame. After all, this government has washed its hand off from new power plant projects; desperately needed in this power-starved country! Maybe the prison authorities have no funds to pro-

vide stand-by generators for essential security lighting in prisons! S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

CNN, BBC and Bangladesh

As a regular viewer of both CNN and BBC news, I am getting just a little bit weary of their negative attitude towards Bangladesh. CNN has reported that there is shortage of food in Dhaka, Bangladesh. I am sure there is, as there is worldwide. But did CNN not think it worthwhile to perhaps report the bumper Boro crop, the bumper potato, the maize and wheat crops, which have also been good this year? Or does that not meet its agenda on Bangladesh? Where do they get their news from? As for BBC, the less said about them, the better. It seems as though they are disappointed when they do not have anything bad to report from Bangladesh. How about reporting the ban on plastic bags in this country, in effect for years now? How about reporting the use of CNG for public transport and how environmentally friendly it is? Or again, do they not meet their goals, i.e. only the negative about this country?

Nargis Haq
Utara, Dhaka

Where are those billboards?

During the tenure of our late President Ziaur Rahman several billboards were erected throughout the city at prominent locations including one just outside the third gate. Significant verses from the Holy Koran were printed in bold letters on those boards with translations in vernacular. The verses used to include warning to the wrongdoers and advice to mankind to follow the right path. City dwellers passing by those boards used to read and be reminded of the guidelines as ordained in the Holy Koran by Allah.

But later on, perhaps after the demise of the late president, those billboards were removed suddenly and were never reinstated.

Our so-called intelligentsia and some of the politicians spew venom at their own religion and try to undermine Islam. They are adamant to discard religion altogether so that our coming generations may pass a free life devoid of morality. May be they have influ-

enced the decision of not putting those billboards back! Islam prohibits adultery and all sorts of vices. It guides us to lead a decent life and have a clean family set-up. We do not wish our country to be full of single mothers as is prevalent in the west. They are now talking of going back to the basics!

So please reinstall those billboards at all the prominent locations. The ACC keeps on advising to free our society from corruption, may be they will consider the above and encourage its implementation as one of the means to inspire people to be honest.

Alas! I miss the great leader. The nation lost a worthy son. May his soul rest in peace. Abul BM Zakaria
East Shewrapara
Mirpur, Dhaka

"Why this sweet name?"

I am writing this letter to give the answer to Wally Rahman's question "Why this sweet name?" You have to read the ancient mythologies to find the answer to this question. In every ancient mythology you will find that the people always liked to worship the evil powers in different manners so that they might not harm them. Devastating and destructive phenomena like cyclone, flood, storm, earthquake, thunderstorm, deluge were always worshiped by people in various manners. They liked to call them by beautiful names (Most of them are female names), they used to sacrifice animals (sometimes virgin girls) so that those evil powers (natural calamities) might not harm them. Still, consecutively or traditionally we are doing the same thing (almost) all around the world by giving them beautiful names.

I think you also know that people in and around the Sundarbans call the Royal Bengal Tiger "mama" so that they might not harm them. It has no scientific basis. Have I succeeded in giving you an answer? Mir Abidur Rahman
Department of English
South East University

Corruption

Corruption is a complex phenomenon that has deep psychological and cultural roots. Beyond the actions of our leaders and institutions, we need to believe that corruption can be eliminated. Such change may take generations and will require a concerted effort from our family, schools, varieties and other institutions. But perhaps more importantly, it requires our commitment to be part of such efforts to effect the change we would like to see. We must understand the reasons why corruption continues to exist in the country and we have to do something about it. People commonly define corruption as some form of malpractice. Corrupt acts fall into two types: small scale (those done by individuals as citizens or in a business context) and large scale (those associated with the government).

Mere introduction of corruption control instruments such as establishment of the ACC, audit systems and other mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation etc without the overall reform of governance will not produce the desired results.

Independent judiciary, free media, free access to information including freedom of expression, political rights, property rights, and free and fair elections and indeed provision of active civil society participation in all aspects of public governance, etc. are necessary to have a corruption free state.

Jewel Rana
Dept. of Biotechnology
BAU, Mymensingh

An appeal

I would like to draw the kind attention of the Chief Adviser to the fact that the poor people are suffering due to the wrong policies and inefficiency of the government. The rationing system is very much essential for controlling the unbearable price hike at the moment. The government should consider the matter in right earnest.

Mohammad Rafique
Sk. Mujib Road
Chittagong

Lawyers

When the entire nation is struggling to get out of the "hartal" and "boycott" culture once and for all, it is very distressing to see that a section of lawyers who grace the corridors of the highest seats of justice engage in such activities. When shall we grow up and call ourselves a responsible people? Syed Nuruzzaman
Bangkok

High price of bread

It has been observed that recently the price of "bread" has shot up. Bread is an essential item for breakfast. It has become very difficult for a middleclass family to buy "bread".

It is apparent that there is no control of the government on the "bread prices". We know that the prices of all food items have gone up but this bread price hike is causing great hardship to us. We would request the government to look into this matter and take necessary action for the benefit of the people.

Nasreen
New Eskaton Road, Dhaka

FCC story

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed's write-up in your April 26 issue on the 50th anniversary of Faujdarhat Cadet College (FCC) brings back a well of memories. I was not a Faujjan - but my younger brother Tanwir was in the first batch of class VII in 1958. There was nothing much for outing in Chittagong in those days - except going to Patenga sea beach. So, when my brother was accepted in the very first batch in 1957, we began visiting Faujdarhat to have glimpses of how a cadet college looked like where my brother would be studying for the next few years! If I recollect correctly, it was Mr. Mojidul Islam who was supervising the activities at that time as acting principal until Col. Brown arrived in 1958. Capt. Moshurul Hoque was the first Adjutant cum teacher.

There used to be a Parents' Day - quite regularly at that time. My parents & brothers & sister would eagerly come days when the Parents' Day would arrive. The day would appear like an Eid Day as the college used to be decorated with festoons & flags with the students in their best to impress their parents as well as the visitors coming from all corners. There were games between students & parents.

Col. Brown would make efforts to meet as many guardians as he could & would proudly tell my father how Tanwiah (Tanwir) would keep his opponents only with his left jab without having to use his right while boxing! Early last month, I met Retd. Brig. Gen. MS Bari. He asked me about my brother Tanwir. Somewhat surprised, I inquired how he knew Tanwir. His prompt reply was that he was his student at Faujdarhat Cadet College. He then went on naming scores of people, quite a number of whom I knew as students of FCC. Teachers remembering names of students & their individual habits 50 years after - well, that's one of the many things that made Faujdarhat Cadet College so special!

If someone can owe his life to a mortal soul, then I owe my life to a Faujjan by the name of Enam Zafri. Dr. Fakhruddin may remember him. He joined FCC in the Intermediate class & later joined me in Chittagong College after passing Intermediate to finish graduation. I was picked up by the Pak Navy personnel on August 31, 1971 around 1:30pm from my O.R. Nizam Road house & taken to the Naval Base at Patenga & was charged with 'harbouring' naval commandos in the ground floor of my building, who had blown up some ships on August 14/15. After their initial 'hospitality' at the base, at around 3:00am in the morning I was taken out of the Guard Room cell (I thought to be shot) & there in the adjacent room was my friend Enam Zafri. One Naval Intelligence officer handed me over to Enam with strict instruction that I was not to go out of Chittagong without written permission from that officer. Later I learnt that several people were involved in getting me released - all non-Bengalis - but there was only one person who had come forward to drive about 12 miles through curfew in the middle of the night to collect me from the base - it was my friend Enam Zafri - the old Faujjan.

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is so right that Faujdarhat Cadet College has been producing brilliant people, but regarding his comment about FCC producing a foreign minister, may I say that FCC groomed him to become a Bar-at-Law.

Ashfaq Chowdhry
Banani, Dhaka

Unbearable sufferings

Price hike of essentials, water crisis and load shedding have become a regular phenomenon in the lives of city-dwellers, especially in Dhaka. All classes of people suffer a lot due to disruption of electricity. I would therefore request the caretaker government to look into this crucial matter and take corrective measures.

Nuzhat Mizan
Department of English
Stamford University Bangladesh

Water pollution



Water is the most vital element and crucial for the survival of all living organisms. The environment, economic growth and development are highly influenced by water. Spatial and seasonal availability of surface and groundwater is highly responsive to the monsoon climate and physiography of the country and upstream withdrawal for consumptive and non-consumptive uses. Our country is the lower riparian of three major river systems, the Ganges-Padma, the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and the Meghna (GBM). The problem is that we have too much water during the monsoon and too little in the dry season.

Water resources are being degraded by untreated domestic and raw sewage, untreated industrial effluents, runoff pollution from chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and oil and lube spillage. Erosion from deforested areas, degradation of watersheds and poorly managed agricultural land have reduced dry season river flows.

We must make efforts to counter these problems and ensure a better world to live in.

Sharifa Yasmin Shawm
Department of Environmental Science and Resource Management
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, Tangail

Rickshaws

It is heartening to see that this debate that I initiated eight months ago with the first of my 15 letters-to-date, is now gaining ground on DS pages. I thank all participants whether they agree with me or not. Lately, readers from Khulna and Chittagong have joined in as have the venerable Messrs O H Kabir, A Husnain and Ghiasuddin Ahmed with many logical and workable solutions to our worst nightmare traffic jams, that often turn us to jelly.

Here are a few tit-bits on this crisis that may interest readers and authorities alike.

1. Last week on my way home at dusk, I saw an elderly gentleman being ejected from his rickshaw on Mohakhali Road. Reaching the spot, I interceded with the cop to let him proceed but all entreaties fell on deaf ears. Only when I blew my fuse and gave the cop a description of his ancestors in the coarsest possible Chittagonian, that he was shocked and taken aback, and before he regained his composure, I pulled the gentleman on to my rickshaw and made a clean get-away. He was carrying a white cane, but that made no difference to the cop or perhaps, he was totally oblivious to its significance!!

2. Baniani is full of NGOs doing yeoman service for the poor and disabled. The NGOs hold frequent trainings, disburse funds and hold meetings to build capacities to enable them to (literally) stand on their own two feet. Some of the poor manage somehow by walking, but for the disabled, it becomes impossible because only the banned rickshaws are available for them as transport.

3. During my frequent walks (after being ejected), I always charge the cops for being unjust to poor rickshawals by hindering their livelihood, while they turn a blind eye to hundreds of illegally parked cars. Their reply invariably is "I do not want to be transferred to Dighinala or some such place" My message to the Top Cops: "Please do not demoralize your force further, at heart they are also poor and you can see the clear sympathy in their eyes" as they puncture tyres.

4. What manner of men with sane minds would advocate banning a cheap, fast, non-carbon emitting fuel-less, environmentally friendly means of transport while propagating use of gas guzzling monstrosities, emitting foul smoke, with blaring horns and glaring lights, unmindful of oil prices hurtling relentlessly to \$150/bbl

Commissioner of Chittagong, cycling to the Court Building in the 50s. I do see some people now using bicycles on my way to work. Unfortunately, most of them are the foreign staff members of NGOs. Can't our youngsters learn their good habits?

As I have reiterated in all my letters, there is a solution to Dhaka's traffic jams enabling both forms of transport to function. Unfortunately, no one in authority has got the temerity to call it a bluff if they think it is a bluff. It is not!!
Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Dhaka

Noise pollution

In Dhaka city noise pollution is increasing day by day, causing suffering to the inhabitants. It seems no one is looking into this problem.

The population of the city is approximately one crore. And it is increasing every day. More and more people are coming to the city from the villages in search of livelihood.

The city roads are full of cars, buses, mini vans, auto-rickshaws, trucks, covered vans, inter district buses etc. These transports invariably use "horns" all the time causing serious noise pollution. On the top of this, many trucks and buses have "Hydraulic Horns" which are used most of the time within the city. The loud sound of these horns causes great disturbance to the sleep of the children and old people.

The law enforcers should look

into this problem and take appropriate action against the culprits. Acitizen
On e-mail

Upgrading of scales

The other day, newspapers published the report that Inspectors of Police (IPs) or Officers in Charge (OCs) of Police Stations will be upgraded as first class but non-gazetted officers. At present they are second class gazetted officers. The news of upgrading is really inspiring but the aim is questionable, particularly for the local level policing. When almost all other government officials at the upazila level are Class-1 gazetted officers of the senior scale, what is wrong with the police to provide an officer of equivalent rank as upazila police officer? In reality, the BCS police officers are not willing to go to the upazila and hence they try to be placed at the district headquarters. The aim of decentralization is to bring the administration closer to the people. Upazila administration has been the centre of all development activities and the functions and responsibilities of police with all other departments at the upazila have increased.

There must be one senior police officer and one class one BCS police officer to oversee and monitor the police activities of the upazila jurisdiction. Only upgrading of the same level police officer, without a qualitative improvement, cannot bring any change.

Manav Kumar
Kakrail, Dhaka



Education and research

Education is the key to success for development of a country. Research, on the other hand, has a close association with education. If we consider education as a "body" and research as "ornaments", integration makes education worthy to the people.

There is no way to dispute these basic premises. Look at

the developed countries, what are they doing with their education system and research technologies? The research organisations or institutes are linked to the universities. Development through education and research is obviously an integrated system. Md. Shahiduzzaman
Germany

Tobacco cultivation

Production of a few food items has increased owing to adoption of modern agriculture technology like, use of chemical fertilisers; pesticides & high yield variety seeds. Notwithstanding all these advancement, Bangladesh could not become self-sufficient in foods and other agro products.

A significant portion of agro-land is used for production of tobacco, what a pity! We urge to government to enact a law to forbid cultivation of tobacco plants.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
Central Bashabo, Dhaka

