



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.

Old Dhaka



The old town area was the main part of Dhaka 50 years back. But now its condition is terrible. The roads are so narrow that two cars cannot pass at a time. The shops and hotels occupy the roads. In many footpaths there are holes and the drains are open and many are in such deplorable condition that it becomes hard to walk through even. The markets here in old town contain no parking spaces. As a result, most of the time the roads face traffic jam. The roads are broken. The manholes are open

which is very dangerous and everyday accidents are occurring. The dustbins are on the road and are so smelly that one cannot walk straight. Even the buildings are made without any plan and design.

I would request the government to rebuild the town and remove the hazards that Old Dhaka people are exposed to.
Md Mahbubur Rahman
Student of European Standard School
Old Town, Dhaka

Jamaat and constitution

Let's hit at the crux of the issues.

Jamaat is based on Moududi's ideas where state demarcations amongst nations, let alone Islamic states, are not recognised and in that aspect the division of India into three countries after 1947 and even the dismantling of the Caliphate states into several Muslim countries are not acceptable to them.

But there is one thing we have to remember. There is a massive chance that ordinary people like me, who do not believe in the Jamaat's stand, may get caught in the vortex of violent measures taken by the Jamaat's hit-groups if they are banned from politics.

I believe no political party should be banned. Everyone has the right to talk and preach as long as that does not amount to treason.
Mufassil Islam

Human Rights Advocate
President and CEO
Islam and Associates International

Poisoned milk

The current milk scandal in China is not only a dangerous problem for that country, as thousands of children are suffering and three of them have already died, but for other countries also. This is a problem for us in Bangladesh. The trouble started when the manufacturers began to use the banned chemical, normally used in plastics, to make it appear richer in protein.

So our health ministry must take quick action to find out whether Chinese milk is still available in Bangladesh market. If it is so, the government must take necessary action to withdraw the same from the market and ask people not to consume such milk.
Sharmin Rashid
Uttara, Dhaka

Price of gas

The government is going to take a decision to raise the price of gas. It goes without saying that we are suffering due to the persistent price hike. If the price of gas is increased, the prices of necessary goods & foods will also increase.

Fertiliser factories as well as other industrial units depend on gas. So, the decision makers should weigh everything very carefully before taking any decision.
Md. Masum Billah
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Metro rail

We hail the government's decision of undertaking the feasibility study and subsequent construction of metro rail Dhaka and thank the communications adviser, Bangladesh railways and all concerned for the long overdue decision.

We are naturally excited at the prospect of experiencing a less traffic jammed Dhaka city. Year 2013 is not far away.

We wish the project all success.
SN Mamoon
One-mail

Climate change

Today one of the hotly deliberated topics is the issue of climate change. The climate of the world is changing fast. The scorching heat from the sun comes directly. The temperature will increase day by day due to the Greenhouse Effect. The main contributor to the Greenhouse Effect is carbon-dioxide produced by the burning of fossil fuel. Thus, they trap heat in the troposphere and stop it from escaping to the space. The net result of the heating of the earth's surface by this type of phenomenon is the Greenhouse Effect. Because of Greenhouse gas emission, the world is warming up, glaciers are melting, the sea level is rising, and the world climate is changing - all at a faster rate than ever before.

Climate change is likely to hit Bangladesh by breaking down agricultural systems, which would seriously affect the country.
AKM Anisul Haque
Department of English
Metropolitan University
Zindabazar, Sylhet

Curse of dowry

These days the curse of dowry is claiming many lives. In our country this appears to be a major problem, though campaign against this social malady is going on.

We should resist it in an organised manner on the basis of a broad consensus.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadi Madrasa
Chaitanyarhat, Chittagong

Weekly holiday

We all know that we are a poor third world country which is dependent on foreign aid and donations for its survival. However, when we look into the government calendar of holidays, it gives us a different picture of our socio-economic condition. It seems that we are an affluent nation!

The number of yearly holidays we enjoy does not make sense for a struggling economy like ours.

Just before the official Eid holidays, the city witnessed a huge crowd leaving Dhaka on 25 September. Tens of thousands of people left the capital to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones, though Eid was officially celebrated on the 2nd, 3rd & 4th October. Which left the country and its economy in a passive state till the 10th of October as most of the people, including government and bank employees, came back to the capital on and around 9 October after celebrating the Durga Puja festival holidays.

Though officially the offices reopened on 5 October, it was evident that employees of different government offices were no way in the mood to work and the reluctance continued till October 9. I am sure if a survey is carried out from 25 September till 9 October (15 days) on attendance and active working hours at the

offices, the figure which will come in black and white will be alarming in the context of our economy.

Also according to different newspapers, most of the employees took two days' leave during the 02 working days on September 2 and 3 to enjoy a 10-day Eid vacation this year. As a poor underdeveloped country, can we really have the luxury of having 07 extra days out of the designated holidays?

In a calendar year, a total of 14 days are allocated as holidays by the government out of the 365 days and if we add up the weekly holidays which are Fridays and Saturdays, we will end up losing another 96 days with no work. On top of that, we lose 21-25 days of holidays for different occasions such as 21st February, 16 December, Independence Day on March 26 and Shab-e-Barat, Durga Puja, Bengali New Year's Day etc.

We have a total of 25 government listed holidays in a calendar year apart from the 96 weekends and if we add Sundays where no international business takes place, we need to add another 48 days to the existing list of non-productive days in our working/financial calendar. After deducting all the holidays and the non-working days we actually get 200 working days or roughly 2,000 hours in a calendar year of productive work in the government and private sector offices. Since Sundays are internationally closed worldwide, we have literally no work as far as international correspondence and communications are concerned. Our economy is dependent on export trade and keeping the offices open on Sundays does not make any sense, other than wasting valuable electricity.

Will our government look into the list of holidays sincerely and revise the holiday list including the weekly holidays. I am a Muslim and I do offer prayers like most of the Bangladeshi Muslims do on Friday which takes 15-20 minutes and does not require the whole day.

Will our government consider shifting the weekly holiday to Sunday, instead of Friday and Saturday?

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

ICL issue

Players have gone to ICL. It is an administrative failure as well as players' inability to handle the matter in a proper way.

Bangladesh team should be a team where both experienced and talented players will be included.

The govt. should ask BCB to clearly explain everything and disclose it to people.
Asifami Rahman Saikat
Engineer
Dhaka

Judges' wigs

A centuries old tradition of wearing a white horse-hair wig in court in the United Kingdom (UK) has ended for many judges starting from 01 October 2008. Subsequently, a simpler new dress code came into force.

However, judges in criminal cases will continue to wear the wigs; those in civil and family hearings will appear bare-headed in court, wearing a new-style plain black robe, according to a report of Reuters filed from London (<http://africa.reuters.com/odd/news/usnTRE4902F7.html>).

After a long debate that divided the legal profession, the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Phillips, head of the judiciary in England and Wales, finally ordered the changes in an attempt to modernize the courts.

Wigs have been an emblem of the British legal system since the 17th century when the fashion of wearing them in wider society filtered through to the courts. For hundreds of years before the reign of Charles II, judges and lawyers were expected to come to court with short hair and a beard.

The decision to abandon wigs has dismayed traditionalists who argue that they give judges an air of authority and impartiality. The degree of anonymity that wigs provided could also protect them from angry members of the public.

John Mortimer, the barrister and author of books, opposed the changes and quoted as saying: "The idea's ridiculous! A barrister without his wig would be like a doctor without a stethoscope."

However, modernists argue that wigs are a hangover from the past that could intimidate people in court.

Lord Phillips has already described wigs as an anachronism that gave the public a false impression of judges.

An UK Ministry of Justice survey last year found that 70 percent of court workers wanted to keep wigs, compared to 42 percent of the public, the Reuters report stated.
Dr. Uttam Kumar Das
Lawyer and Researcher
Shyamoli, Dhaka

Greed and need

Unfettered free market capitalism is motivated and recklessly driven by greed. Possibly it was Dale Carnegie, who wrote "The more you get, the more you want".

The periodic financial crash of the US stock market is the glaring example of this insatiable greed of the rich. For them, the stock market is a very high stake gambling den, with the national economic stability as the stake! It's domino effect is disastrous! But do they care?

No; because Uncle Sam is there to bail them out; maybe, with some dent in their fortune and wealth; which they believe to be something "easy come, easy go". The current financial "meltdown", is the end result of this high stake irresponsible gambling in the stock market.

The real sufferers are the ordi-

nary average American salary earners. They park their hard earned savings in stocks, in the hope of a satisfactory return on their investment, towards old age financial security.

They are the worst sufferers; unlike the financial tycoons who indulge in stock market speculation only to get rich quick. It is these financial sharks who are the hub and spokes of the capitalist free market wheel, where unrestricted wheeling and dealing is the order of the day! Now it has come to a crashing halt, at least temporarily.

The bail-out that the US government plans, tapping onto taxpayers money, is essentially to cushion the losses of the super-rich investment gamblers.

The hope is that some of this cushion will trickle down to ordinary share holders; who may some years ahead; if they hang on to the now worthless share scripts, get back their money. This could be between fifty to eighty percent of their investment, or may be all of it; for some lucky ones.

In contrast, socialism tends to satisfy the basic needs of the people.

These are, food, shelter, healthcare, followed by education and infrastructure needs of transportation and communication services. These basically improve the general standard of living for the people to a reasonable level. These are the primary goals of socialist governments based on the principles enunciated by Karl Marx. There is no scope for speculative free access to capital financial market. All profit and loss is in a sense "of the government, for the government, by the government". Capitalistic share market operation is non-existent there.

China, which is trying to adopt to greedy Western ways by encouraging some private investment has burnt its fingers in the recent share market hiccup; possibly tied to its joint venture or direct investment of overseas capital coming from Western sources.

In socialistic model, citizens are encouraged to buy various types of government securities, with guaranteed reasonable return on investment.

This neither makes anyone overnight billionaire, nor overnight beggar-- the necessary evil of unfettered free financial markets of the West!

Our government should take a lesson from this and introduce rules and regulations to keep the stock market under constant vigil, and pre-empt any such explosive financial decompression or meltdown before it happens.

It is now taking place in the Western free-market economies! S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Should we be embarrassed?

I have just found out that the judge felt embarrassed to quash the proceedings against Khaleda Zia in Barapukuria coal mine corruption case petition!

Several years ago another Judge

Pertinent points

What is the difference between this present caretaker government and our previous so called democratically elected governments? Answer: No difference. They are all the same. This government is simply making blunders when it comes to making crucial decisions.

Who is running this nation, anyway? Where are we heading? Will we be labelled as a failed nation again? I do not think there is anyone who could answer these questions properly.

We know that reform in our police department is a must because we are still relying on an outdated regulatory framework dating back to 1861. Presently, our police operate under a law promulgated 147 year ago. Since

the independence of Bangladesh, nothing has been done to change the laws.

We have always seen that our political parties, while in power, use police as a force against the rival parties.

We reprove the home ministry's action in delaying the reform. But we are sanguine that this reform will be implemented and people will have faith in the police force.

The IGP wanted a change in the existing system. And it should have been welcomed by the caretaker government.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka



was embarrassed to give judgment on the murders of the Bangabandhu and his family members. To me it looked like a judge could feel "embarrassed" to hear any case at will. I thought this was a serious problem of the justice system.

I would like to ask Mrs. Khaleda Zia how it feels to hear about the latest "embarrassment" by another judge on her case. While the verdicts of hundreds of thousands of cases have been given since independence, a judge felt "embarrassed" to hear the case of the Murder of the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh. How does it sound or feel?

One can temporarily obliterate truth, but it will eventually come out. The way the most important matter was handled gives you some idea about the character and moral values and the intention of the people at the helm. This was a foolish trade for momentary win in lieu of permanent defeat.

This important and sensitive issue has been handled in the most deplorable and mind boggling way by several regimes. No one can hold on to power forever. The series of political changes in Bangladesh since 1971 shows us just that. Innumerable mistakes have been made at different stages

in the history of the nation. Some mistakes are damaging, but curable. Whereas others simply are irreparable.

Bangladesh started on a wrong footing with a quarter waiting to take revenge for their defeat. They were hell bent on dealing a serious blow by aiming at the heart and systematically eliminating the core values that led to our independence. When this opportunistic group of people succeeded in their plans, they took control of the country through widespread corruption.

The nation's psyche has been damaged and paralysed by the following:

- 1) The conspiracies and brutal murders of Bangabandhu and his family members.
- 2) Jail Killings.
- 3) Indemnity Act.
- 4) Murder of Khaleda Musharraf.
- 5) Murder of Colonel Taher.
- 6) The events that led to the murder of Zia.
- 7) Murder of General Manzur.
- 8) The officers implicated in the Zia killing.
- 9) The opportunistic people who avail themselves of the opportunities for endless corruption that has grown without bounds with the passage of every year, irrespective of parties.

My advice to the authorities and politicians: Repair the damage as much as you can with wholehearted devotion. And last, but not the least, please do not be "embarrassed" to find a viable solution.
Tariq Matin
Potomac, Maryland

Automobile menace

Hats off to Ms Farzana Afrin of Mirpur for her above letter printed in DS of 10 Oct 08. She has in short, logical and factual sentences portrayed an accurate and realistic picture of the traffic gridlocks that have brought Dhaka to its knees. She has described the evils of free parking on public roads as a major cause of tailbacks, even when there are laws against it.

I am sure, if read avidly it will have more effect than the 26 previous letters I have sent to DS in the past 12 months. She has done it all without once mentioning the dreaded word RICKSHAWS.

I would just add one other point to her narration: There are two main and necessary systems of public transportation.

1. Mass transit systems consisting of buses, human haulers, minibuses etc that ply on set routes, usually the main roads.

2. The other is point-to-point transport that takes one from doorstep to doorstep i.e. from home to office, shops, schools, friends etc. Into this category falls private cars, CNGs and rickshaws. Only a privileged minority (1-2%) own cars (but occupy 75% of the roads), perhaps another 30-35%

have the physical ability to use the rickshaw, tortuously designed, ancient buses, minibuses and haulers. Maybe 10-15% are lucky to be able to hire and to afford the arrogant CNGs.

This leaves a vast majority (approx 50%) of the elderly, women, children, disabled, sick, infirm and people carrying small loads, of the middle and lower classes who totally depend on rickshaws for their mobility. Yet it is this cheap, easily available, environmentally friendly and productive segment that has been totally blamed for the traffic jams and banned from many main roads. IS THIS SOME NEW SORT OF DEMO-CRAZY?

I invite those who have passed this BLATANT anti-people law to garage (on the road?) their cars for a month and let them and their families use the public transportation available like the rest of us. Then if they 'like' being ejected from rickshaws by their lackeys in all weather conditions, day or night, and if they then think this decision to ban rickshaws is in the public interest, I will personally applaud them for their 'astuteness'.
Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1
Dhaka

Solar power

Although the world has reached the age of modernization, but still Bangladesh cannot afford 24 hours of complete electricity everywhere. The villages are still in darkness and only a few have received electricity. Even the Dhaka city suffers from load shedding and so many factories and industrial units are facing the same problem.

The greatest challenge now for Bangladesh is to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity.

We can generate solar power in the roofs of the factories, offices, and shopping malls. This can be very effective in our context.

A student
European Standard School
Dhaka

Ethics

Ethics means moral values. It is an important virtue to be gained. It helps a man to decide what to do.

A man's real challenge comes when he/she enters the professional life. He/she has to decide what to do. He has to choose between right and wrong and ethics helps him in this respect. If his moral values are strong, he can differentiate between right and wrong.

Moral values should be taught from the very beginning of life. A child normally learns this from the family. But nowadays parents have little amount of time that they can spend for the child!

Educational institutions can play a vital role in this area.
Montasir Mamun
Sher-e-Bangla Hall
Department of Civil Engineering
BUET

Industrial pollutants



Rapid industrialisation creates high demand for energy & water. Waste generation and thermal pollution are general features of industrial development. Pollution is the main cause of environmental degradation. Environmental threats to health in the industrialized nations are also a matter of great concern.

We have to consider two things. First, the severity of the present environmental degradation, and the anticipated future trends that have critical implica-

tions for attaining sustainable development and the quality of life. Secondly, the priority, ability and willingness of the country to minimize the degradation processes, and to take protective measures against them. These are crucially important to our existence.

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