



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.

## High costs of education

What is the cost of education of our children in schools, colleges and universities? Is it not like exorbitant prices of essential goods and commodities? Is it not price hike of education for all students at all levels?

You send your son or daughter to any private or government school, college or university for education. How much you spend for his/her admission, tuition fees, purchase of books, uniform, private coaching and other expenses?

Is it possible for the poor or middle class people to bear all these expenses?

There is a rich and influential class of people in our country like ministers, MPs, political leaders, secretaries to the government, high govt officials, police and army officers, industrialists, eminent lawyers and doctors, contractors and businessmen etc, etc, who spend a colossal amount of money for education of their children not only in our country but also in foreign countries like the USA, UK and India. How can they afford to spend a huge amount of money for education of their children? What is

their source of income? If the rich people can afford education for their children why are the poor and middle class people deprived?

Article 19 of our Constitution says that "(1) The State shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens. (2) The State shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and of opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic.

Is it not true that the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer day by day in our country? Is not discrimination in education leading our country towards darkness? We are always engaged in accusation and counter accusation against each other but where is the accountability and transparency of our works and money?

**O H Kabir**  
Hare Street  
Wari, Dhaka



## Bangla as official UN language

I welcome the JS resolution to this effect and hope that the long cherished hope of Bengalis everywhere comes to fruition. Having said that, from my own experiences of UN service, I can see very cogent objections which we must be able to refute. Firstly, although Bengali is the 5th most widespread language in the world, the UN membership is not of individuals but of sovereign States. State-wise Bangladesh (with a population of 150 million people) is the only member of UN, so that on the basis of population of the State members of UN, perhaps India with Hindi, or Indonesia with its own language, or even Pakistan with Urdu has a stronger claim to make these also the official languages of UN.

On the other hand, although languages such as Spanish or Portuguese are spoken by much smaller number of people worldwide than Bangla, many more States have these languages as official language, where national laws in the light of international laws are written down in these languages.

It appears that it is not how many people speak the language, but in how many States laws are made in a language (except the permanent members of Security Council which includes China), which is the criterion to get the blessings of UN for one of its official languages (and consequent expenses for producing international laws and proceedings into these languages).

I personally do not know how to circumvent these objections or whether the 'richness' of Bengali is sufficient to outweigh these. I however urge those active minds who have gained support for this proposal to consider these with a view to cogent rebuttal if it comes to that.

**Engineer Shafi Ahmed**  
London, UK

## Rain and road digging

In our country, road digging is one of the major problems for the general people. I am also one of the sufferers.

The authorities concerned should coordinate their activities to avoid road digging during the rainy season.

**Anis Kadamtala**, Dhaka

## Pitiful PWD

A local daily's staff correspondent's interesting report of April 1 on the subject clearly showed that PWD had been fooled even before the All Fools' Day (1 April)! However, they can get some satisfaction, that they were temporarily fooled! Now they are hopefully wise (?) after the event at least.

Let us see what happens later. Will the stand-by power generator really work when needed or candle power will be the final cost effective solution!

The next fooling round will be the time needed for purchase, installation and commissioning. Reaching a hopefully fool-proof decision at the fog end of March 2009, we will be lucky if the generator will be operational by end of March 2010! After all, time marches on without waiting for fools or philosophers, or PWD for that matter. Hopefully, PWD will not fool everyone and themselves by saying that it will be ready within six months; lest they forget that "there are many a slip between the cup and the lips".

Hopefully, the PWD is now wise. The next fooling will then begin.

Installing the generator is one thing, but keeping it functional is another, and this might fool the PWD after all. May be the operator will be in the bathroom when power fails, and slips and falls down in the dark when returning to start the generator.

Who will then start it? I am sure that PWD is wise enough to have an auto-starting generator to begin with and hopefully someone will ensure that it is topped up with fuel if it is a diesel generator. Again PWD will be wise enough and have a gas-engined generator, and ensure fuel is there always! Fuel failure will be Titas Gas headache, not PWD's.

As an added precaution; enough stock of candles and matches to light the candles will be on hand, so that at least candle power will be ensured, if watt-power fails for one reason or another. Hopefully, along with putting up the note for a generator set, PWD will include the indent for candles and matches! They should be careful about this, as stocking candles and especially matchboxes may well violate the Fire Safety Rules, making PWD fools all over again! It is a bad world, is it not?

**S.A. Mansoor**  
Dhaka

## Renaming BDR

Many political organisations have changed their names but we have not seen any noticeable change in their way of thinking or in their activities. Many examples can be given that only name changing cannot play any vital role in changing activities.

So, only changing the name of BDR might not produce the desired results.

**Sumona Sharmin**  
Green Road, Dhaka

## BCL burden

Pardon me for my reaction, but it seems a footnote has gone missing in M Abdul Hafiz's post-editorial titled "A losing battle from a slippery slope" in your issue on April 6, 2009.

The bottom line should have been: These are just an appetizer; the main course is coming.

The Brigadier of bygone days, with panache of intellect writ on his current outfit, laboured quite hard to point up how the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) has been a bane for the ruling

party. Vandalism, thuggery, extortion and plunder by the BCL men are now going on in the country's major educational institutions. The horror is spreading all over, and is likely to surround more universities and colleges in no time. It is just BCL today; tomorrow, activists of the mainstream Awami League will join the pack in keeping with their past history. The real conflagration will then start.

The problem is no genuine effort is in sight to stem the rot. The proclamation that prime minister Sheikh Hasina, enraged by what is happening, has given up her role as the BCL guardian, is widely perceived as more political than real. Some BCL leaders have said they would persuade Hasina to reconsider her action. And only fools will believe that she won't. It's only the question of time and the time should be sooner rather than later.

I shall be happy if my prognosis goes wrong.

Is there, therefore, no light at the end of the tunnel? One may pertinently ask. Yes, there is a light. Rein in the BCL boys genuinely and put them under leash. Please curb their lust for money and control. Let them not allow a laissez faire world where they can resort to any sort of transgression with impunity just because their main party has won an overwhelming victory in the national election.

These are just few answers. But who cares? Brute majority, in democracy, is a dangerous thing unless the beneficiaries know how to judiciously exercise it. As Jack Livingstone once said, "The arrogance of majority is a suicide note".

**Sharif Ahmed**  
Park Apartments  
Baridhara  
Dhaka

## Smoking in public places

The letter entitled 'Smoking in public places' published in The Daily Star on April 3 has drawn my attention for a raft of reasons.

The writer seems to have made wholesale allegations against smokers. When it comes to smoking in public places, it seems to me that there has been a serious lack of understanding among the general public.

Tobacco Control Act explicitly defines that 'public place' means educational institutions, government, semi-government and offices of autonomous bodies, libraries, elevators, hospitals, clinics, court buildings, airport buildings, sea-port buildings, river-port buildings, railway station buildings, bus-terminal buildings, ferry, cinema hall, covered showing place, theatre hall, shopping buildings, public toilet, children's park maintained under the supervision of the government or public, and such other places as may be determined by the government, by notification in the Official Gazette.

However, people can surely

smoke in designated smoking zones in these public places.

It is not mentioned anywhere in the law that a smoker cannot smoke standing in an open footpath or in roadside tea-stall. Many people, not knowing the law properly, seem to point finger bluntly at a person who might be smoking in a legitimate area, which is his/her right.

The writer also unnecessarily tried in vain to portray the violation of law as a political issue. As the tobacco control act was enacted in the country only in 2005, there is no sense in saying that the violation of tobacco laws re-started in 2001.

I think people should understand the law properly before pointing finger to others. Bangladesh does have a very strong tobacco control act compared to our neighbouring countries and law enforcers are doing a good job for implementation of the law, which came into effect only three years ago.

Considering all these, is it fair to compare a smoker with a terrorist?

**Abul Bashar**  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

## Importing electricity

Bangladesh proposed to import electricity from Nepal, India and Bhutan. Does Nepal generate enough energy to meet its domestic consumption? My personal experience in Kathmandu does provide enough evidence that Nepal cannot export electricity. Kathmandu suffers from acute shortage of power supply, load shedding takes place for at least 8 hours a day even in winter.

It may not be the wisest statement from government based on such inadequate knowledge about its neighbours.

**Munim Chowdhury**  
One-e-mail

## Remittance

Remittance inflows will slow down in the coming months, as migrant workers are returning home, following strict enforcement of immigration rules in different countries.

The migrant workers are passing through a crisis. We know remittance is our second biggest source of foreign currency earning.

The government should address the issue with a view to lessening the impact of the global meltdown on our economy.

**Farida Begum Poppy**  
Shamoly, Dhaka

## Darbar Hall rental money

We certainly do understand that it is somewhat a little too early to broach this since the govt. and BDR are preoccupied with important and urgent issues. Still life goes on and we have to address and attend daily issues. We have to attend day-to-day matters and resolve pending matters.

I would like to draw the

attention of the BDR authorities to the issue of booking fees paid in advance to BDR. As everybody knows, Darbar Hall of BDR used to be rented to the members of the public for the purpose of wedding, reception, meeting etc. etc. Understandably, the hall can not be made available in the foreseeable future. People who had booked the hall and have paid booking money (quite a substantial amount) are certainly a little anxious, though constrained not to express, for understandable reasons of being misunderstood, to know about refund of their money.

I do hope that the BDR authorities would issue a statement/clarification about this as soon as possible according to their convenience.

**Mufazzel Hossain**  
Banani, Dhaka

## Unexpected

All higher educational institutions in the city, including Rajshahi university of Engineering and technology, Rajshahi new Degree College, Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute and Institute of Health Technology were closed following violent clashes at Rajshahi University. This was really unexpected. Every student wants to get a better environment free from any type of violence. From 1947 to 1990 student politics played a crucial role but now student leaders use their muscle power through showdowns on the campus, creating panic among the general students. Our student leaders have no patience to observe the situation.

If this situation continues for a long time, the entire education system may collapse.

**Md. Alauddin**  
Dept. of chemistry  
Dhaka College

## Pay Commission's recommendations

From media sources we came to know that the government is not in a position to implement the recommendations of the Pay Commission in one go.

It was also learnt that the minimum salary bracket to be recommended by the Pay commission will be 4,500 and the highest bracket will be 45,000. Although it sounds reasonable that our government can not afford provision of additional funds required to implement the pay commission recommendations in one go, I would still request the government to consider implementation of the recommendations fully from the next budget for the government staff working in the lower brackets of the pay scale. For example, the government may consider implementing the recommendations fully from next budget for the group falling in the range of 4,500-6,000 taka salary bracket, as this group could hardly benefit from gradual implementation due to present high living costs.

**Chowdhury Golam Kibria**  
(Jibon)  
Associate Professor  
Business Administration  
Jahangirnagar University  
Savar, Dhaka

## BCL leadership

According to a recent newspaper report, 'Ongoing crisis splits BCL leadership.'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina earlier ordered the BCL activists to refrain from committing any violent acts on campus. But they defied her directive and engaged in violence. So the prime minister can never be blamed for the situation created by some unruly students. The prime minister has recently severed her organisational links with Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL)- this, we think, is indeed a timely decision. Most of the people will appreciate it.

The BCL activists now need to rectify themselves. The general people always want to live a peaceful life. All political parties including the ruling and the opposition parties, therefore, should work for the welfare of the people who voted them to power and elected them as their representatives with a view to getting the best service from them all.

**Habibur Rashid Ismail**  
Jamea Rahmania Fadi  
Madrasa  
Choitenyarhat, Chittagong

## Rickshaws in Dhaka

It was very disappointing to read your article in DS of 29 March entitled "Gridlocked". Being a former secretary to the government, I would have expected balanced views where the interests of all Dhakabashis are served. Unfortunately, some of your suggestions lack logic and practicability viz:

1. Increase in number of buses will create more gridlock as they carry only about 20-25% of Dhaka's total passengers who are mostly young and physically fit. They ply on just the few main trunk routes only. Most roads are too narrow to accommodate them.

2. At a stroke you demote 50% of passengers who use rickshaws for short point-to-point journeys to become pedestrians. How will the old, infirm, disabled, women, children go to bazaar, school, office etc.?

3. Rickshaw related activities generate about Tk. 10 crore every day for about 20-25 lakh people who pull, repair, make them and their families. Yet you want to tax them additionally.

4. You do NOT mention that Dhaka has about 3-4 lakh private cars already (against 3-3.5 lakh rickshaws occupying 30 sft space) occupying 70-100 sft of space each, 75% of road space while carrying less than 2% of passengers at astronomical costs. During any gridlock you are stuck in, just get down and survey the number of empty cars involved.

5. Instead of encouraging more use of CNG autos you advocate tripling (and crippling) taxes on them. How pro-people is that when they carry more passengers than private cars at lesser cost?

6. There is no need to increase bureaucracy three times in BRTA, DOE, DCC, DTCE etc if their corruption can be decreased three-fold.

7. The basic cause of Gridlock in Dhaka is the inflated egos of owners of Gas Guzzling Monstrosities who cannot even think about walking, cycling or taking a CNG for short trips and illegal parking and license-less drivers.

In this connection I have written 36 letters to The Daily Star, most of which have been printed. Facts and figures given there have never been refuted, rather they have been supported by most sensible readers. How can any sane person advocate the banning of rickshaws in our present economic condition when there is no viable alternative. Yet you propose taxing them and confining them to lanes, when these are already occupied by parked cars.

**Sikander Ahmed**  
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka



## Foreign investment

Investment in Bangladesh will not be dependant only on cheap labour or govt's repeated calls to foreign companies. Law and order is the second biggest point. Legislation has to be done so that the police dept can work without political influence. Although the PM and the home minister asked police to become honest and dedicated, but they failed to prevent unholy influence via telephone calls.

The decision makers should understand reality before they "cry" for foreign investment and tourism development without setting up the minimum infrastructure.

**Dr Azizul Karim**  
GRAustralia

## Language issue

International Mother Language Day was observed throughout the country. It is true that our martyrs who had sacrificed their lives for this language are remembered, but real respect lies in showing proper respect to the very language for which they struggled.

When the language & culture of a nation get destroyed, it becomes easy to destroy that nation. We should guard against such ominous possibilities.

**Tamanna Ferdous Munni**

Dept. of ELL

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University Chittagong

## People's power

We must be aware of the fact that a government is a variable force which may change in course of time. But the common people together form a

constant force which has an immense power of regeneration. The nation never mortgages its power to a government after a parliamentary election. So any problem, whether it is created to embarrass the government or not, certainly afflicts us. Recently, our country passed through a series of violent crises viz. Pilkhana carnage, helicopter crash, some terrible conflagrations, workers' turmoil and change in labour employment policy abroad. There is political instability and violence in many educational institutions. Moreover, we are inflicted by a global economic slump. We are like prisoners whose destiny is uncertain. Ultimately, there will be a great economic crisis in our country.

Our future generation will be born in the darkness of violence and instability. Now we must stand against all sorts of violence.

We must keep in our mind that those who work against peace and prosperity of our country are surely our enemies. These cursed enemies must be wiped out if they cannot be rectified. The mask of all culprits must be unveiled. But this act must be accomplished through scrupulous scrutiny. Politics must be used as a blessing for our country. The government along with the big companies of our country must come forward to create more employment opportunities. Self-employment must be inspired with appropriate patronage. Every possible inch of our land should be used in a scientific way.

What a tragedy for us that the history of our independence is to be updated every five years!

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