

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.

Toxic fruits

Our country has long been regarded as a land of fruits. Each and every season comes with its colourful fruits such as guava, black berry, wood apple, litchi, watermelon, jackfruits and mango, the king of fruits. In fact, we see that our markets are flooded with different types of mouth-watering fruits in different seasons of the year, particularly in the rainy season. But little we know how fresh and safe are these fruits. We come to know from different sources like newspapers that different toxic materials like formalin are being used so that the fruits do not rot very easily and look very attractive. Common people are consuming these unhygienic fruits unknowingly and consequently suffering from various fatal diseases like cancer, and typhoid. It seems that these fruit vendors have lost their humanity for earning money. And they are running their illegal business in front of the law enforcing agencies.

We hope that the authorities will wake up from their deep slumber and ensure safe and fresh fruits for people.

G.S. Hossain
Rahmatganj, Chittagong

Cricket

Our national cricket team has been performing badly in the last few years. Our media is

very kind to them and branded them as Tigers. Accidental win in one or two games is not a yardstick of total performance. The skipper of our team boastfully told the press that they would defeat India or Ireland.

Our players should be able to assess their strength correctly.

Mahbubul Haque
Chowdhury

Former General Manager
Agrani Bank, Dhaka

Our priorities

The party robots are chanting Digital Bangladesh, as per the gayebi awaaz from above! Where are the pragmatic steps in planning, project approvals, and the different phases of applications (3-D model) every two years?

Don't forget the heavy budget, and tsunamis. Bangladesh is sandwiched between a big neighbour in the E and W. Himalayas in the North, and the Bay of Bengal in the South; plus: Saarc is not working!

The bases and infrastructures have to be created. Before that comes some pilot projects in different technical areas, for evaluation, and avoiding systems losses in operation and maintenance (our greatest weakness culturally).

First the regular availability of power supply in the rural

areas. Where is the spread (broad-spectrum)? Don't beat the drum with some micro-projects. Then the availability of cheap hardware and software processing, assembly). Third comes the training of trainers; followed by the training of the trainees. Can we assemble the so-called US \$ 100 laptops-the first one million machines? Optical fibre network is far behind schedule. We are trying to impress whom?

The above topics are taboo for public discussions. Take another example: recharging of 25 million batteries of mobile telephones used in the outlying areas where electricity is not available. It is a huge market for cheap, small, portable, charger units (folding, solar panel, with telescopic 6ft pole. No local product or imported one is available locally (even dry cell chargers using three AAA dry batteries).

We are daydreamers, living in the past, messing up the present, and facing a bleak future. Why politics is popular in 21st century? Dynasty rules are worse. Religious politics too heart-oriented (subjective). What's left? Chaos, terrorism, and civil disobedience movements. Can we think digitally? All outputs are analogue for day-to-day applications for impressing the man in the street.

Alif Zabr
Dhaka

Kalurghat Bridge

Once the age old Kalurghat Bridge was only route of communication between the city and South Chittagong and Cox's Bazar division. With the passage of time we have a new bridge (Shah Amanath Shetu).

But the Kalurghat Bridge has no respite from the pressure of vehicles and heavily loaded lorries as yet. Moreover, it has become a matter of utter disgust for the commuters to come to a halt in a long queue on both sides of the bridge as the heavily loaded lorries often have breakdown on the bridge.

Besides, irregularities and indiscipline regarding the bridge have gone beyond measure and it seems there is no authority to look into the bridge.

Asir Faisal
Shah Amanath Housing
Society
Sholokbahar, Chittagong

Education

Education is very important but there is a lack of understanding of its importance among people, even the politicians who rule country and also the so-called intellectuals of society.

The aim of our life is being set as becoming a highly paid professional, sacrificing morality, religion and righteous actions. There is virtually no effective morality and religious teaching in homes and schools, and no initiative to teach children to care for the poor & needy, become humble, simple and hard working in nature, respect elders and become an advocate of good things. This is quite apparent in some of the things happening around us. Sons of rich parents are going out for joyrides with loud music in expensive vehicles paying no attention to the safety & problems of the people in the road.

I read in a weekly of 10th July an article that many college students work as prostitutes for earning money. There are students who have multiple girl friends or boy friends (and multiple phone numbers), although these things are strictly prohibited in our religion. Many students, including meritorious students, are drug and alcohol addicts, although they very well know it is prohibited by our religion.

Goodness is not judged by whether someone knows engineering, maths or not. It should be whether his views and actions are modest and decent.

Md. Ali
Uttara, Dhaka

Vat on health service

One of the basic needs is getting health service. A news published in The Daily Star on 14 July, 2009 states that from now on patients would not have to pay value added tax (Vat) as declared by the High

Court. It is good news for poor and middle class people. But the government should have some rules and regulations for fixing the diagnosis charge. And it will be wise if Vat on doctors is also withdrawn, otherwise in the name of vat general people will have to pay money two or three times the current visit rates.

Md. Humayun Kabir
Deputy Manager (ops)
Palli Karma Sahayak
Foundation
Agargaon Administrative
Area, Dhaka

Treatment abroad

"Health is wealth" is a proverb known to everybody. On the other hand wealth is required to maintain health. This becomes more visible when we see that many prominent persons of the country frequently leave for Singapore for treatment in Mount Elizabeth Hospital. A far larger number of people than what comes to the newspaper frequently go to Singapore and other countries for treatment.

They consider the treatment in foreign countries as 'sure success'. Many a time we see that patients are leaving the country in wheel chair or stretcher for treatment abroad and come back in good health in cheering mood which advertises the success of treatment abroad. Private medical facilities have recently developed in Bangladesh opening a door for Bangladesh commoner to be able to take the advantage of this opportunity. But financially able Bangladeshis have little faith in the local medical facilities and they leave for treatment abroad.

People illegible to govt. facility for treatment are found to have the tendency to go abroad for treatment with public money. This sort of treatment expenditure should be incurred in such a

way that it doesn't require any investigation by future governments in power by making further expenditure as we observe such cases are happening now. These create lack of confidence in public mind to have treatment in the country. Before going for any treatment abroad one should make sure that facilities available in the country have been availed to its maximum. Well, the rich people will go abroad for treatment. But in the process a huge amount of hard earned foreign currency is spent. Treatment abroad is like purchasing foreign service and goods. While purchasing goods and service from abroad one has to pay tax and vat as per customs and tax rules. Similarly, taxes and vat should be imposed on medical treatment abroad from where the govt. can earn revenue.

Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura
Dhaka

Your heart

Medical Journal Lancet in one of its recent edition carried an encouraging scientific report which stated that human heart has major regenerative powers, how it works need further research. The fact came to limelight when Sir Magdi Yacoub of Imperial College London, one of the world's top heart surgeons and his team successfully implanted a donor's heart directly onto a young patient's failing heart in 1995. Hannah Clark, the patient from Cardiff, UK had developed severe heart failure together with lung problems. She was then only 8 months old and the surgeons instead of performing transplanting of both her heart and lung implanted a donor heart from a 5-month old directly onto Clark's own heart. As the implanted heart and her own heart were working well after nearly 5 years, the doctors decided not to

take out Clark's extra heart. But the drug Clark had to take to prevent her body from rejecting the donated heart led to cancer that required Chemotherapy. But this didn't stop spreading cancer and her body eventually rejected the implanted heart. But miraculously by then Clark's heart had fully recovered and the doctors successfully removed her donor heart in 2006. Now Clark is 16 years old and started living a normal life including playing games, doing a part time job.

The above mentioned miracle has brought a new hope for the heart patients. Once the mechanism of the heart's ability to regenerate and healing damaged tissues is found, treatment of heart failures will enter a new era.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural
Extension & Information
System
SAU, Dhaka

Student leaders' age

Very recently BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleida Zia, I am sure after very serious considerations, has appointed the topmost leaders of the student front of her party Chhatra Dal. About half these newly appointed Chhatra Dal leaders are in their mid 40s and the remaining are in their late 30s. All of them finished their normal education career long ago in the mid 1990s. Thank God, the newspapers have not published their CV. Had it been so, people could know how bright they were in their academic life. As students, one may assume, these 'Adu Bhaish' must have been very poor students. Most of these student leaders are married and some of them are already fathers. Almost all of them are engaged in business. Many of them are known to be involved in tenderbazi (forcibly capturing contracts for construction work and for supply of stores), chandabazi (extortion) and bhortibazi (getting students of lower merit admitted into educational institutions).

It is generally believed that it is these so called student leaders who are responsible for all the violence and terrorism in the campus and the session jams. The leaders of the AL's student front Chhatra League are also the same. If these are the qualities and activities of our present student leaders what the ordinary young students are going to learn from them. If a big political party like the BNP, or the AL, has to rely on these 'uncles' to lead their student front, people can justifiably doubt about the sincerity of these parties. In the last general election, it was observed that the superannuated student leaders of all the major political parties had almost no role to play in favour of their masters. As far as local politics is concerned, these old boys had lost their appeal and influence long ago. Our people do not take them seriously. It is not understandable why our major political parties can still not get rid of this nuisance.

Our public universities,

unfortunately, have been breeding, harbouring and patronizing the 'Adu Bhaish' at the cost of the poor taxpayers' money under the cover of some rules which are certainly anti-people. Philosophically speaking, we all remain students till our death. Any one may be a student at any age by getting himself/herself admitted into a faculty or institute in an M. Phil or a Ph. D programme by simply paying the required fees. If nothing like this is possible one may get admission into a LLB programme in any law college and wear the tag of a student at any age.

Well, there cannot be any objection to anyone's sincere desire to acquire knowledge in any subject by enrolling oneself as a student at any age. But it is surely objectionable if one remains a student at the age of 44 or 38 with the ulterior motive of becoming a student leader to mislead the students and ruin their career.

The universities must make rules not to provide any tuition, food and lodging to such irregular and special students at subsidized costs, as it is given to the regular students. They must be made to pay the actual costs. Except for academic, research, and sports organizations these irregular and special students must not be allowed to be members of students' unions, or other students' organizations.

As per the RPO no political party can have its student organ. Even then, it is not understandable, how are the political parties still openly maintaining and patronizing their student organs?

Syed Ashrafuzzaman
Mohakhali DOHS
Dhaka

Tourism

The road conditions, hotels, communication, consumer goods etc are dependent on a country's economic condition and any tourist, or those who organise tourism, are well aware of these and make allowance for them. So these factors do not affect tourism to any significant degree, but what does is the 'law and order' situation in a country. A visitor is a welcome guest and should be able to roam with safety, on foot or in a vehicle, (say even a bullock cart or a ferry boat) in any part of the country at any time of night or day, but alas this is not possible in Bangladesh. No government can achieve this condition by itself and it requires national effort including that of the opposition to rein in the godfathers (who are well known) of all criminal and rowdy elements, racketeers etc.

A permanent 'national law and order council', composed of all political parties, is therefore needed to give regular guidance to the nation on such matters and advise the incumbent home ministry for any action.

Tourists will then fall over each other to visit such a peaceful country no matter what is its infrastructure or perhaps to see such an infrastructure.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London
UK



G-8 Summit

G-8 leaders assembled in Italy to address global issues. With no exception, this year leaders of the developed countries have come up with lofty promises. But what is heartening to note is that this year the leaders did not come up with any clichés like 'combating terrorism' frequently used in Bush-Blair era.

However, they have pledged \$20b to stave off the food crisis which is like a drop in the bucket. We know when the economic crisis takes a swipe at the

developed countries; the poorer nations are heavily affected by it.

The developed countries have already cushioned their economy from recession by bailout, incentive schemes and protectionism. But on the other hand, the developing and underdeveloped countries are left in the lurch due to their paucity of resources.

Md. Jamil Akhter
Dept. of English
University of Dhaka

Attention: Swedish Embassy

Recently, the Swedish Embassy in Dhaka introduced a new procedure for the issuance of student visa.

All applicants must apply for the visa through VFS, a servicing agency, based in Bombay, India. We were advised to apply for a visa at least six to eight weeks before the start of the class. Hundreds of us applied in May-June 2009 for our autumn session starting in August 2009. However, VFS is giving us an interview dates between mid August and end of September 2009. After the interview, they send the file to migration board in Sweden and it takes another 4-6 weeks to be processed in Sweden. As a result, hundreds of these applicants can not avail their sessions in August 2009. In addition, at the interview, Swedish Embassy simply rejects the case only because it's too late to attend the class for the applicant. We pay Tk. 8,000 visa fee, plus Tk. 700 service fees to VFS, in addition to gathering all the supporting documents.

It takes at least three weeks to have the papers collected, attested by a 1st class magistrate then authenticated by the ministry of foreign affairs. It is the VFS who assigned us an interview date in late August or September, even though we applied 10-12 weeks before our arrival date, instead of 6-8 weeks the Embassy asked. If it is too late to attend the class, then why the Embassy or their agent VFS collect visa fees from us, and give us an interview date too late?

We cannot enter the Swedish Embassy, except our assigned interview date and we do not get any reply of our

email requests. In this situation, some dishonest educational consultants in Dhaka are charging Tk. 20,000 from applicants promising to bring the interview date forward and many students are giving them the money as we have no choice.

It is our earnest request to the Swedish Embassy to expedite student visa processing, so that we can attend our classes in time.

Bhuiyan B. Ahmed
Kakrail, Dhaka

Muslims in China

The crackdown on Uighur Muslims in China is a matter of great concern and has been covered by the media with video footage of repression. Turkey's president after returning from the G8 summit said, "The event taking place in China is a kind of genocide" and added that "There is no other way of commenting on this event" citing the report that hundreds of people have been killed and thousands hurt (DS, 12th July page:7)

It is ironical to notice that our Islamic parties kept mum when the situation went so far that all the mosques were forced to close down and the Friday prayer was not permitted.

Dr. Shameem
New DOHS
Mohakhali, Dhaka

Hats off to Obama!

President Obama, in his recent speech at the Ghana parliament said,

"No country is going to create wealth if its leaders exploit the economy to enrich themselves."

"No business wants to invest in a place where the government skims 20 per cent off the top."

"No person wants to live in a society where the rule of law gives way to the rule of brutality and bribery."

Hope our politicians have read his speech.

Wally Rahman
Vancouver, Canada

What are they doing?

In the early hours of July 12, 2009 I happened to be present at ZIA to see off a relative. It was 04.00 hrs in the morning and passengers of the Gulf flight to Bahrain were checking in. As I was returning I was surrounded by a few passengers with request to fill in their embarkation forms. They admitted that they don't know how to write. I tried to divert them to "probashree kallyan desk" but found the same empty. The check in counter persons behaved with the would be NRB's so harshly that they dared not to approach them. Needless to say I filled in their forms and wondered, is it the right behaviour to our foreign exchange earners? Why there should be a decorated desk if help is not available when necessary.

M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

Tigers win

Bangladesh cricket team won first Test against West Indies by 95 runs. We congratulate the cricketers.

Earlier people felt frustrated due to the players' poor performance. This win has brought a ray of hope for cricket lovers of the country.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadi
Madrasa
Chittagong

Generators



For severe and intolerable load shedding round the year people have started buying generators to meet their respective needs in offices, factories, even at residences. But this alternative device not only means some extra costs for the owners, it pollutes the environment, mainly in two ways.

Every generator generates some sound and thus when you are in a

market (such as New Market) and where almost all shops have a generator, you do not hear anything from your nearby person when the devices are working. Generators also eject some harmful gases like Carbon-Dioxide (CO2) etc.

So, we should think about the issue.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka