

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.

Civil servants

It refers to a news item and an editorial by The Daily Star that the government is considering administrative actions against the civil servants who are performing poorly and using red tape for financial gains. The wheels of the bureaucracy are grinding to a standstill. Many of them do not work sincerely. They are more interested in using their positions for personal gains.

The perception about Bangladesh's bureaucrats has not really changed much, despite a number of initiatives being taken to make Bangladesh's bureaucracy as effective, efficient, responsible and reliable for government's administrative functions, election pledges of the ruling party to voters and to make common good to citizens. Whether Bangladesh's bureaucracy has improved or deteriorated has given a

to restore probity in public life, it is essential to focus on corruption in the top echelons of administration. The most effective way to do so is by focusing on 'outcome' of poor performance in service, corruption (movable and immovable assets of public servants) rather than 'process' of corruption, i.e. flouting of government orders, rules etc. It is felt that existing anti-corruption institutions have failed to effectively nail the corrupt public servants as it is very difficult to prove wrong doing through perusal of files and file notes. It will be easier to prove accumulation of assets (both movable and immovable) disproportionate to one's known sources of income. Moreover, an Integrity Commission could be set up by government of Bangladesh at the national level. The



fractured verdict by media and readers.

Most of the high profiled bureaucrats seem still accustomed to being under military rule, and they do not have any regard for democratic norms and values. They have somehow developed cosy ties with some individuals close to the prime minister's office, think they are above everything.

No wonder, the word 'bureaucracy' is still used as synonym to talk about procedural delays. In fact, the extra-large size of Bangladesh's bureaucracy, non existence of performance-linked incentives, political interference and complex nature of problems in Bangladesh have stopped Bangladesh's bureaucracy emerging as a performing bureaucracy.

Time has come to decide that in order

Integrity Commission can adopt the simple method of verification by first making public the returns filed by the concerned public servants and then inviting the public to come out with whatever information they have regarding the assets possessed by the concerned individual. Property returns of all public servants who occupied or are occupying high public office in government need to be verified in a "fast track manner". The Commission can also make discreet enquiries before making its findings public. All investigating agencies of the government like the DGFI, CID, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Economic Offences Wing, Intelligence Bureau, etc. can provide assistance to the Integrity Commission.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada

Today our priority has to be power generation and not rationing. Why does not the BERC identify and label energy efficient consumer goods like air conditioners, refrigerators, electrical fans, industrial drive motors and even cars, buses and trucks and such equipment; to ensure energy conservation by using only energy efficient products. Again, do they have the technical capability to get this done; so that import of energy inefficient models of electrical goods are penalised with higher duties and taxes when imported.

Even "poor" USA has this criteria applied on all purchase of electrical goods and gadgets for the US government! Can we not adopt, and if need be, copy their benchmarks. I am sure they will not deny this if we ask for it. They may even set up procedures (mostly standardised usage) for carrying out this worth while protocol, which can help us save waste of energy in future. In the national interest, if necessary, I can help to start it up with cooperation of BUET and set the ball rolling!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Chittagong election

On June 17, 2010 Chittagong City election was held and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party backed M Monjurul Alam won the race. The election has been termed free, fair and the votes declared that they were not intimidated and no irregularities have been seen.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a letter of felicitation thanked and greeted the Election Commission law, enforcing agencies, local administration and democracy-loving people of all walks of life of the Chittagong City Corporation for holding the election in a free, fair and acceptable manner.

She said that the city corporation election was a bright example of the government's strong commitment to holding free and fair election.

But the test is not over yet, we are waiting to see what happens in the Dhaka City Corporation election, if there happens to be intimidation and irregularities, people will definitely think that M Monjurul Alam became CCC Mayor because the government wanted him, so it did not interfere and people were able to cast votes in favour of their candidate without any hindrance.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Why nicknames?

Some people have been using their nick names so rampantly that it is now on the verge of abuse. This is because of their ignorance about the purpose and reason of using nicknames.

Nicknames are termed as a kind of private language that tend to function for bonding individuals. It reflects the intimacy of relationship between friends, relatives, spouses, father and son, father and daughter, mother and son, mother and daughter, and sometimes bosses and employees. That is why the use of nicknames is called idiosyncratic communication that is developed and used within the context of a personal relationship. Therefore, it is obvious that nick names are to be used in personal and private contexts only.

Would any gentleman allow

another person who is not his near and dear one to address him as 'honey', 'baby', or 'bunny'? But some of our educated people use nicknames like Hossain Pintu.

If you look at the signboards of hospitals and clinics, nameplates of doctors, engineers and officials, and even business cards of some established people, you will be surprised to see their meaningless nicknames at the end of their names sometimes within brackets, sometimes without.

M. Rukanuddin
Dhaka

Tax on saving certificates

From the income year 2010-11, the government has imposed tax @10% on the interest earnings from the saving certificates. This decision will reduce the net income of the investors and cause a lot of sufferings to the people who are dependant solely on this income. On the other hand, it will also reduce the number of votes in favour of the government nominated candidates for the up coming Union Parishad, Pourashava and City Corporation elections. So, for the sake of the people as well as for the government itself, such type of tax should be withdrawn immediately.

U.K. Roy
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Biotechnology

In recent years, all the inventions that promise to make our life on this earth easier are from life sciences. Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology is the most remarkable field in this regard. Biotechnology ensures sustainable development. Just a few days back, Bangladeshi scientist Dr. Maksudul Alam made a breakthrough in elucidating the genome sequence of jute. It reflects the prospect of biotechnology in our national economy, health, environment etc. But unfortunately extensive research and studies are not done on biotechnology in all the universities. Research in this field is very expensive and requires proper patronization from the govt. Private sector investment needs to be encouraged. Most private universities run courses on BBA, MBA, computer science and other commercial fields. So the govt. should make it mandatory for private universities to conduct research and studies on Biotechnology & Genetic Engineering. Thus biotechnology will surely contribute to the development of Bangladesh.

Md. Jakir Hossain
Dept. of Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology
University of Chittagong

Bureaucrats

Finally, the Bangladeshi kingmakers and kingship breakers are, presumably, heading to face some music. Historically, Bangladeshi bureaucrats have never faced any major punishment except few stand-by transfers, temporary sackings, mild reprimand, stoppage of promotions for time being, idled as OSD etc. The highest punishment, we have heard, were few forced retirements for gross misconducts.

We do not know, what type of music the present government intends to play to the ears of the bureaucrats.

Whatever may be the punishment scale, the bureaucrats of the Republic should

Traffic mess

Recently the government took some steps to remove transports older than 20 years from mega city Dhaka. The end result is, thousands of passengers are seen waiting for their vehicle to move to their respective destinations which doesn't end within less than two hours. Especially, the female job holders are the worst sufferers from the day the transport removal mission started. The owners of various transport companies are staying away from their business for

the last few days to avoid such subtraction of their vehicles and waiting for the present government pressure to go off, causing the situation to further deteriorate. From the Daily Prothom Alo, I came to know the grievances of the factory employees, arriving mostly from rural areas, as they are not able to reach their workplaces in time.

The issue deserves better handling.
Shameem
Dhaka



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

Amar Desh

The Daily Amar Desh, a Bengali newspaper of Bangladesh, has survived through a historical verdict of the Appellate Division of Bangladesh Supreme Court. The government cancelled the Declaration of the newspaper and stopped its publication on June 1, 2010 because of the absence of a legal publisher. The High Court Division of Bangladesh Supreme Court stayed the decision of the government for three months. The Appellate Division upheld the judgment of the High Court Division on 18 July, 2010.

This is a historical verdict for the freedom of press and journalists. We appreciate it.
Mohammad Kawsar Uddin
President
Bangladesh ICT Journalist Forum

Save the pensioners

It is indeed very disheartening to note that an elected government of the people is so inconsiderate towards its retired employees. With effect from July 01, 2010, the government has reduced the interest rates on PSCs knowing very well that this benefit goes only to the retired govt. employees, their families and widows. On the one hand, it is offering tax exemptions to certain privileged classes to the tune of crores of taka and on the other hand, it is depriving the old retired government employees of a meagre amount, so essential to them for their survival at this age with the ever increasing prices. I as a sufferer would, therefore, humbly request the Honourable Finance Minister to please reconsider his decision and restore the earlier interest rates of PSC, to offer some relief to the old retired government employees who dedicated the best part of their lives to serving the government with their meagre incomes of yesteryears.

A sufferer
One-mail

Indian terrorists

Bangladesh is a country that is geographically very important in South Asian map. For its over population and as a developing country, the South Asian terrorists usually hide in the remote areas of the country, especially the hilly areas. The Indian, Pakistani and Burmese terrorists hide in safe places for the planning terror attacks. Recently ULFA leader Major Ranjon was arrested with an associate from Kishoreganj by Rab. This is not the first time but a regular process. Last year the ULFA chief Arbindo Rajkha was arrested from Chittagong. After a few days the Indian Media said that, Arbindo surrendered to the police, but Arbindo told the reporters that he did not surrender.

That is really a threat for Bangladesh's national security. India always complains that Indian and Pakistani terrorists usually hide in Bangladesh considering it a safe area. This kind of accusation creates a negative image of our country in the international arena.

Many of Bangladeshi underworld terrorists are also hiding in India, especially in Calcutta. They even continue their criminals activities from India. Indian security forces often arrest them, but they are rarely handed over to Bangladesh.

India and Bangladesh should cooperate with each other in this field.
Fahim Ibne Sarwar
Dept. of International Relations
Jahangirnagar University

private universities. I have seen many guardians of my students paying tuition fees by selling their land.

May I ask the government if this huge number of students would go to India, Thailand or Nepal for higher studies would they get better education than they are getting now here? If there were no private universities in Bangladesh it had to lose a huge amount of foreign currency. Considering the economic condition of the poor and middle class families, the government should change its decision of imposing VAT on tuition fees paid by private university students. Instead of imposing VAT, the government should give subsidy to the really poor students studying at private universities.

Dr. M. Mahboob Hossain
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

All of us know that the government has added 4.5% vat on private universities' tuition fees. I am really shocked by this decision. We know the government is unable to produce the required number of seats in public universities. That's why most of the deprived students admitted themselves into private universities to continue their higher education in their desired subject. Many of them collect money from borrowing or selling land. Why has the government forgotten that these students have a great contribution to developing this nation? Statistics show that to make a student graduate from BUET, the government has to pay 8 lakh taka. And most of them go abroad and take part in developing another country. The government should think about a less expensive higher education system, but alas! They imposed value added tax on education. Is education a business? For 4.5% vat the students have to pay an extra Tk 40,000-50,000. That's why some of the students will not be able to continue their education. Does the government want it?

So my request to all the educated people: raise your hands against this unlawful decision.

Tahsin
Dept of Computer Science & Software Engineering
American International University-Bangladesh

Food security

Proper conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources (PGR) is essential for universal food security. Wild and cultivated plant species, landraces and genetically improved genotypes of economically important food and industrial crops constitute invaluable pools of genes for crop improvement and diversification. Tolerance to drought, salt, heat and cold and resistance to pests and diseases are highly desirable and valuable traits in crop improvement programmes. The need to amplify world food production can only be met by appropriate management and use of elevated quality PGRs, required for the improvement of better-adapted and higher-yielding cultivars.

Shohag Mostafij
MBA (Strategic & International management)
University of Dhaka

Rickshaws not allowed

The other day my wife had gone to the Kushal centre grocery market in Uttara sector # 3 to do daily shopping but when she reached near the Rajlaxmi complex from sector # 5 the on duty policeman stopped her rickshaw and told her that she could not go further. On inquiring my wife was told that the whole stretch of the by-lane has been made off limit for the rickshaws because now this road has become a VIP road and only cars are allowed to ply this road. My wife asked who made the road VIP and she further said that so far she knew this street had been purposefully constructed for rickshaws only. The policeman said, "I don't know. I am just obeying the orders of my superiors."

I would therefore request the authorities to lift the ban immediately and ease the movement especially of the

female members of our families.

Humayun Hyder
Utara, Dhaka

Ineffective directives

An interesting front page article on the matter published on 19th July rightly stated that BERC only passes time by issuing ineffective circulars, wasting public time and money! In effect, it is not worth the paper in which it is written! Mere circulars cannot regulate the minimum temperature at which an air conditioner can be set! Better would be to install sealed thermostat limit-switches, set at the minimum temperature desired. One wonders if BERC has the technical and organisational capability to do it.

It was stated that all air-conditioners should be set at 25deg.C, during off-peak hours. What will be the setting at peak hours? Or is running of ACs totally banned during

maximum demand period of 6:00pm. to 10:00pm?

The fact of life is that most of our power generating equipment is so worn out and unreliable and inefficient. These have not been properly maintained, because of lack of spare capacity to take generating sets off-line for proper maintenance and overhaul. Further, quite a number of plants are so old, that spares and components for these equipment are no longer manufactured and available.

Recalling the grand days of the BNP, they were very busy procuring 'Khambas' I (Electric poles), which to them had top-most priority based on good 'under-table' percentages! Their next effort was to rationalise and set agreed prebid 'goodies' for power plant projects! Unfortunately, their time ran out and the 'ungrateful' voters did not put them back in power!

This robbed them of the proverbial 'Goose' that was to lay 'golden eggs' for them!

This is great, the opposition would be crazy not to answer a call from the PM.
Neena

Oh, surely you MUST ban Jamaat-e-Islami. Any party doing politics in the name of religion should be banned! Zero tolerance policy, absolutely!
H. Chowdhury

Is it a party document or a national document?
Concerned citizen

World's large democracies, India and USA, do not enforce anyone's photo to be displayed on a mandatory basis. Leaders who are great are remembered and revered by people and not by orders and legal sanctions. Why is our PM constantly looking back and not concentrating on the present and future? We would like her to lead by doing real good for the people and not by blaming others and history.
Shubroto

The game of amending and re-amending the constitution is not going to produce creativity, vision and dynamism in the management of the country. For development and freedom of people, visionary action is required on a daily basis
Zerosopher

If the troublemakers get bail, it is the law that has a loophole. We have witnessed muggers and stalkers getting free through the fissures in law. The government's good intention is enough to handle the situation.
Nasirullah Mridha

Referendum is the only answer. Earlier amendments are now being questioned
Mahfuz Sadique

Very nice gesture from the PM, the BNP should send a representative.
Bipasha



Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

Door still open for opposition

PM says JS special committee can be recast (July 23, 2010)

Choose one option BNP:

1. Send a lawmaker representative or
2. Let the people's parties amend the constitution as per their electoral pledge.

S Khan

Do you find George Washington's portrait displayed in every US government office? Please for heaven's sake, the time has come when you should

be avoiding conflicts just because of a portrait. Respect all the leaders, they have worked hard to give their future generation the fruits of freedom and not to fight over portrait display.
A reader

If the PM is sincere, why does not she invite the opposition leader to discuss about constitutional amendment?
A citizen