

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.

Anthrax scare



The recent anthrax scare has hit Bangladesh pretty hard. Sale of red meat has fallen as much as 92 percent, 523 people have already been infected with anthrax (DS: 17.09.10) and fresh infections are being reported almost on a daily basis. These figures have already become frighteningly large but what is most worrying is that sick cattle are still being slaughtered and consumed in rural areas. It seems that these people have absolutely no idea of anthrax contamination in the country. We want to believe the government is trying its utmost to prevent the situation from getting any worse but the facts and figures are not helping at all.

With Eid-ul-Adha less than two months away, the government needs to reconsider its plans to tackle the situation. The concentration should be on the rural areas. The general people needs to be made aware of the dangers of being in contact with sick animals. A mass campaign can be introduced involving schools and colleges. This way many children coming from different families will be able to know how to tackle anthrax and later teach other family members to do the same. The teachers can play a big role here as our country people heartily respect them. The idea of involving Imams and Alems to fight anthrax is truly praiseworthy, and we desperately need more such innovative ideas. Everyone can contribute in this fight against anthrax by raising awareness amongst his or her family and community members through posters, writings, speeches- absolutely anything and everything. If we try our best, The Almighty will surely help us.

If we don't want anthrax to break out into an epidemic form during the coming festival, let us act from now. Because prevention is certainly better than cure.
Shahriar Kabir
 Sagorika 2, Eskaton Garden Govt. Officers' Quarters
 Dhaka

Death

I tried to remember what happened when I was asleep and was shocked by the fact that I couldn't remember anything. I swore never to die. But whatever we do and with all the money in the world we can't stop death. Scientists still haven't found any way to overcome it.
Tasnia Zaman
 Dhaka

nity to stay with an American family in the US, study for one academic year in an American high school and most importantly exchange culture! Each year many Bangladeshi girls and boys get selected to go on this program. Our batch was called YES-8 batch. In YES-8, 31 Bangladeshi boys and girls got chance to go to the USA.
Prapti Anandita
 Oldham County School
 LaGrange, Kentucky
 USA

A special programme

I have always dreamt of going abroad and studying in a foreign school. My dream became stronger when I applied for the Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES). YES is an innovative high school exchange program funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. "This Program intends to build bridges of international understanding, especially between Americans and people in countries with significant Muslim populations" as it is said in their website. There are many organizations working in many countries as the coordinators to select participants for this program. This scholarship program gives students the opportunity

Spurious drugs

Spurious or counterfeit drugs are a public menace in our country. They are mostly ineffective and can cause grievous injury or even death. The existence of spurious drugs in Bangladesh is well known, although not the precise extent. The present government has decided to bring in legislation to hand out the highest penalty to those who manufacture or sell spurious drugs that cause grievous injury or death. This is in line with the recommendations made by several committees and the media. None of them have opposed capital punishment but the point is that stern penalties are a necessary but insufficient condition for putting an end to

the spurious drug industry. The present system has serious shortcomings that need to be overcome before any tangible results can be seen. For instance, the drug control administration directorate found the drug control infrastructure grossly inadequate to tackle the menace. There is a dearth of trained drug inspectors across the country. Non-uniformity of enforcement has not helped the cause either. Although committees constituted in the past made many recommendations, the core issues have remained unresolved. The top priority must be to strengthen the drug control machinery and give enforcement teeth. The fact that not a single prosecution has resulted in life imprisonment since the Drugs and Cosmetics Act was amended in the past to provide for this enhanced punishment shows that legislation alone does not suffice.

Although the government shares the responsibility for keeping a check on spurious drugs, the pharmaceutical industry cannot disown responsibility.

The weakest link here is the distribution network. No amount of policing by the government will help unless

the companies beef up their distribution networks. While some manufacturers have their own clearing and forwarding agents to handle certain drugs, the need for a well established distribution network for all drugs cannot be ignored. Several committees make the sensible suggestion that the pharmaceutical industry should work closely with the government and also have a surveillance mechanism. The manufacturers should put in place an effective system for handling public complaints and encourage any information on spurious drugs from the public.

Educating wholesalers and retailers to identify spurious drugs is another suggestion made by the committee; this is a challenging task as the packaging is close to perfect and even experts find it difficult to tell the genuine from the fake. One of the ways to beat the counterfeiters is to use advanced packing technology. This will become a reality only if the government makes it mandatory for at least antibiotics and life saving drugs.

Consumers have a crucial role to play in arresting the proliferation of spurious drugs. Being the least equipped to tell genuine from spurious drugs, they should be advised to buy drugs only

from reputed and well-established chemists. Insisting on bills with the batch number of medicines clearly mentioned, staying clear of chemists who sell drugs at a discounted price, and destroying used containers bearing the manufacturer's name indelibly marked are simple ways of ensuring that the drugs being bought are genuine. Consumers need to be wary of doctors themselves providing drugs rather than prescriptions. Moreover, drug testing carried out by some public service organizations enjoying wide consumer acceptance will go a long way in supplementing the government's efforts. Educating the public on the circulation of spurious drugs and the dangers they pose should be high on the agenda of the government, the pharmaceutical industry, and the media.

Spurious drugs are no doubt dangerous, but are commonly ineffective. Although capital punishment would be an extreme step for those who manufacture and sell them, stern punishment like cancellation of licence and life imprisonment must be considered.
Avik Sengupta
 Biochemistry, McGill University
 Montreal, Canada

SEC's role

Thanks to Dr. SN Mamoon for his Post "SEC Interventions" published in your daily of Sunday, September 19, 2010. Dr. Mamoon has rightly said with figures how SEC's intervention works. We, the investors, are silly and stupid and are not fit to judge the situations and SEC has been empowered by our government to look after our interest. They are doing a thankless job. Pity, the silly investors instead of appreciating their "Timely actions" want to put them on the dock.

Shame on the stupid investors who do not want a capable guardian like SEC.

Habibul Alam
 Banani
 Dhaka

African economy

Africa is the world's second-largest and second most-populous continent, after Asia. At about 30.2 million km² (11.7 million sq mi) including adjacent islands, it covers 6% of the Earth's total surface area and 20.4% of the total land area. With a billion people in 61 territories, it accounts for about 14.72% of the world's human population. Africa has plentiful natural resources, but poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and inadequate water supply and sanitation, as well as poor health, affect a large proportion of the people who reside in the African continent. But now Africa has real energy emerging from a generation of young entrepreneurs who are determined to compete on a global scale.

According to a survey report, the latest Biogas initiative will identify "pockets of opportunity", and initially focus on programmes in African countries with the strongest market potential. The Initiative aims to install 2 million household-level biogas plants in 10 years. The ultimate objective is to develop a sustainable, com-

mercial biogas sector, which will in turn improve the lives and livelihoods of families in Africa. The Initiative will foster partnerships and knowledge exchange, provide leadership and experience to developing and implementing national programmes, stimulate further technology and market based research, and help identify and develop financial resources for the programmes.

Africa is coming up.
Md. Shahriar Parvez
 Lecturer (School of Business)
 City University

Introduce BRTC bus

The distance between Jurain to Motijheel via Doyaganj is a little over 4 kilometres but the bus fare is very high-- Tk 8. In return what we get is immeasurable sufferings. The bus companies don't care about the sufferings of the passengers at all. Half the passengers commute standing. They conduct the bus service with so few buses that in rush hours hundreds of people stand in queue. There were two companies in the route but in the middle of the month of Ramadan a company named Rangdhanu stopped its service. It just increases the crisis beyond tolerance level. Almost all the buses are quite unfit to move within Dhaka. Most of the seats are broken. In some buses you can't find benches at all.

Over half a million people live in the area of Jurain, Postogola, Shyampur, Kadamtali, Muradpur, Gendaria & Doalirpar. So if the government provides BRTC bus service from Jurain to Farmgate, Mirpur, Mohammadpur or Mohakhali via Motijheel, it will greatly reduce the sufferings of the people here. It will be highly profitable too.
Solaiman Palash
 East Jurain, Dhaka

The leader

An interesting write-up of September 19 in the pages of a local English daily reaffirms what we feel best describes the BNP. It does not stand for 'Bangladesh Nationalist Party'; but 'Boro Natokio Party' (in Bangla). In line with these words, the "Netri" too likes to create "Natok"; even for a routine matter, like joining parliament!

She wants to be away and absent, but draws every paisa as allowance and travel expenses; remaining a permanently absent MP! Morally for MPs, it should be no work, no allowances and facilities! After all, theirs is a temporary job for five years and extension of tenure depends on the employer, in this case, the voters.

Our 'Netri' believes in "demon-crazy", not democracy; where might is right, and 'right' is meant for the waste paper basket! Where my house, my sons, my 'this' and my 'that' it is not only her desire, but the 'Netri' misguidedly believes it to be the most important national priority!

As for her descendants, they only believe in "grab as grab can"; which is wealth in 'all forms and shapes and sizes' that enables them to be able to afford long stints of "health tourism" in various parts of the world!

So much, for their love for the country! The BNP 'Netri' and her kith and kin, believe in the upside-down sayings. For them, these are: "wealth is health" and "power is knowledge"! Nothing else matters!
Befooled voter
 Dhaka

No more blame game

With every passing day, the repetition of some words in the newspaper are getting on our nerves: vandalism, demand for withdrawal of cases by the ruling party, question leakage, exemplary punishment, blaming this and that etc. The way the things are, it seems the machine of governance is falling apart. The good governance is characterized by decisions and their strict implementation with the coordinated engagement of the government machinery which has become an endangered species in our country. Cannot we save it? The government cannot evade the responsibility for law and order by simply blaming others. The vandalism carried out allegedly by the Juba League last Friday in Pabna that forced postponement of the recruitment exam has caused a great chasm in the administration there. The officials that feel belittled by the highhandedness of the local ruling party cadres are now set for applying for mass transfer if the accused in the vandalism are not brought to book. So, now the government has no scope to take this incident lightly. The earlier it springs to action, the better.
Tinku
 Lalpur, Natore

International news

I am a regular reader of The Daily Star, especially the international news and the erudite write-ups. But it makes me disappointed to see that almost all the time the international pages are filled up with a lot of advertisements. Sometimes big pictures of unimportant subjects are posted seemingly to fill those pages only.

As a reader of an English newspaper I always want to know the happenings of the present world around us alongside our country. As I cannot simply afford the expenses of buying the international magazines, The Daily Star is my only window to peep through the vast outside world.

My humble request to you is: please publish more international news and if necessary post those advertisements in other pages. Separate pages for advertisements can also be taken into consideration.

Monzur Rahman
 Muhammadpur
 Dhaka

Tax free car for MPs

I felt ashamed when I read news of tax free car for our parliament members. I know from the newspapers that the Tax Free Car Project alone will cost one thousand crore taka. It is amazing that they are all (govt. and opposition members) united to pass a law allowing their perks and facilities, though they cannot form unity to pass bill for common welfare of the people. We are known as the most poor country in the world and more than 50% people live below poverty line. In Dhaka city alone 2 million people live in Basti and live an inhuman life. The people living in Basti cannot manage two square meals a day. There are no sanitation facilities, no pure drinking water facilities and Medicare facilities. Having seen this miserable condition people of other countries are extending their hand in helping this destitute people. Our parliament members also do not hesitate to seek help from other countries. Our govt. is also seeking help from other countries and innumerable NGOs are working for alleviating poverty in this country. We are to pay thousands of crores of taka as interest for the foreign loans and under the circumstances I wonder how our public representatives wish to lead a luxurious life at

the cost of public exchequer.

I request all concerned to think in terms of austerity and refrain from wasting public money for luxury. I want to draw their attention to the news item that 30 ministers in England have no full time car and they use cars from the govt. pool.

Md. Elias
 Deputy Manager (Inventory Control)
 Bangladesh Gas Fields Co. Ltd.
 Brahmanbaria

Then and now

Earlier, the head of the state used to go to the field to see the problems of the people and took measures immediately regarding those matters.

But now the situation is different. The top administrators seldom get the time to visit less important places.

Sheuly Haque
 Tarash
 Sirajgonj

Poor show

The article "18th BCS officers got zero in English" published in an English daily on 17th Sep'10 is not a new complaint against the PSC regarding the irregularity and corruption but it's really a horrible picture of the poor quality of the civil service officers where getting zero in English they can be appointed in the era of global advancement and when our country is progressing towards the "Digital Bangladesh". Is it possible to go ahead with such kind of civil servants who have been appointed through irregularity and corruption! Now, time has come to re-think to rebuild our civil administration sacking those corrupt/inefficient civil servants as we have a lot of talented/quality candidates to serve the nation.

In this case, I would request the Honourable Prime Minister to instruct the relevant authorities immediately to investigate properly to find out the candidates who got appointment illegally in the said 18th BCS exams and to take serious action against them to set an Example before the nation in order to re-establish the rule of law as well as to proceed towards the vision of the government 2021.

Sultana Ferdousi Rosy
 Jheeluli
 Faridpur

Fruits



Bangladesh is a land endowed with various types of bounties of the Almighty. Different kinds of fruits, fishes, vegetables, and medicinal as well as wood plants are available in this country. The people of Bangladesh are vastly acquainted with the consumption of various salubrious and wholesome seasonal fruits. Every season brings in the message of numerous tasty and juicy fruits! Due to smooth transportation and communication, both the people living in villages as well as cities are now enjoying the taste of these fruits. However, it is a matter of great regret that, becoming the victims of the greed of dishonest businessmen, the fresh seasonal fruits are now losing their original and classic tastes! Banana, Papaya, mango and many seasonal fruits are now being ripened in artificial and harmful ways. Some days ago, a newspaper reported that, papaya was being ripened (?) through heating. Green banana can easily be ripened within one or half an hour! We don't actually want these kinds of 'conditioned' fruits! We only want the taste of classic and juicy seasonal fruits. The govt. and the law enforcement agencies should take appropriate initiative in this regard.

Khondoker Rezwan Tanvir
 Dept. of Business Administration
 Shahjalal University of Science and Technology
 Sylhet

Traffic in Dhaka

The traffic jams in Dhaka are unbelievable. As the country's capital, it is a big mess. There is no sign of the authority's responsibility to the public. There is no proper ratio between the amount of available road and the number of vehicles. The ever increasing number of additional vehicles on the road makes life more miserable for the citizens of overcrowded cities. Millions of work hours are at a standstill on the road. How can the people of

Dhaka get out of this painful situation? There is no simple solution. I think the government should encourage more public transportation and discourage private vehicles. Like all other big cities, the morning rush hour goes on from 7am-10am. In these three hours the left lane of all main roads should be reserved for public service buses only. All other buses and private vehicles would use the other lanes. Similarly, the same left lane rule can

be used for three hours in the afternoon. Residents should be encouraged to take public service buses and leave behind their private cars at home. Public buses should follow a strict schedule with discipline. During rush hours, every two minutes or five minutes (depends from where) there should be frequent bus service so that passengers can travel comfortably instead of having jam-packed buses. Government authorities should treat bus owners and their employees fairly in a public-private partnership.

Also, young people should be encouraged to ride bicycles. School and office areas should create room for bicycle racks, so that people may park and lock their bicycles. The government should enact a law which requires helmets to be mandatory for bicycle-riders to prevent injuries. A two feet wide bicycle lane should be made farther left beside the public bus lane. Improve rush hour rail and water bus service.

Proper plan and quick implementation could alleviate the sufferings of many people. It breaks my heart when I see on T.V. a helpless ambulance with its alarm on and flashing lights stuck in traffic. Imagine how frustrating this situation must be for the patient inside. Authorities, please wake up and act now!
Nokib-E-Nobria
 Toronto, Canada

