

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.

Jam-free clean Dhaka

We do not need to get advice from the PhDs to solve our daily traffic problems. What we need is simply some good intentions and sincerity. The initiatives may be summed up as below:

1. Remove the filth from both sides of the road. Massive clean-up campaign is required. This will free 25 to 30% usable space.
2. Carpet/repair the roads/streets, not done in the last 6-7 years.
3. Footpaths are to be re-done where needed.
4. New law should be made to forbid obstructions or piling up of construction materials, garbage, etc. on the footpath.
5. It will be the onus of the building owners to ensure the environment is clean around the buildings. A fine can be imposed on the owners if they do not follow the rules.
6. No new vehicle is to be registered for two months to see the impact and have a control over the volume, etc.
7. Let the proposed new buses be strict with the number of passengers to ply with. They must be touching only designated stoppages.
8. More (5,000 may be) new garbage bins are required with workable schedule of professionally emptying them.
9. Work out a programme of taking away small industries and garment factories, gradually and in phases, from the city to the outskirts.
10. Let a small tax be imposed on the affluent property owners for the upkeep of the city.

All these or even some of these could make a big difference to make life relatively easy, if the authorities demonstrate responsibility. It is a shame to see that many a times The Daily Star has tried to highlight the plight of Dhaka streets with pathetic pictures and stories, yet there is no initiative to address them!

Syed Imtiaz Ali
Banani, Dhaka

Poverty and children

A UNICEF study reveals that over 30 million children in Bangladesh are living below the poverty line. Our authorities have been working for these children with the help of UNICEF for many years. But it's not understandable why the

situation does not improve. What is the government doing in this regard? If we cannot improve the overall condition of the children, we can never improve as a nation. Because it is the most important matter the govt. should pay attention to in the national interest.

Mahmud Ali Kabir
Ex-BSS correspondent
Gopalganj

Rudderless BNP

Local English daily on 21st October discussed this issue. Normally, political party's agenda should have a national objective, giving the party's viewpoint on what should be done, or not done, objectively and logically reasoning. Focus should be on national interest and not subjective personal or even party interest.

Given this rationale the BNP's agenda appears to me as a farce, with focus only on Khaleda's house and a way out for her sons' alleged corruption.

It is like a ship without a rudder, with occasional small 'sails' of popular issues, being tied to the mast, only to attract public attention and nothing else. She, the party leader, wanted to sort out the house ownership legally, but now does not believe in legal measures. Not satisfied with one house in Gulshan, she wants the other one too, set in a palatial setting. About Tarique Zia, the less said the better. To sum up, BNP's agenda is well stated in Shakespeare's couplet from the 'Hamlet':

"It's a tale, told by an idiot,
Full of sound and fury,
signifying nothing."
QED
Dhaka

Bangladesh

After independence Bangladesh went through period of famines, natural disasters and widespread poverty. It also saw political and military coups. Democracy was restored in 1991. However, GDP growth has doubled since 1970s.

Most of the population still lives in villages but migration towards towns and cities is on the rise. Bangladesh faces many problems such as energy crisis, traffic jam, pollution, etc. It is a young country and needs time to flourish into a stable and prosperous one.

Tanha Kashfia Kate
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Preserving our wetlands



Wetlands are very important ecological sites in nature and they act as bioremediation in the natural process. Wetlands serve as a reservoir for runoff water during heavy rain periods and help reduce the amount of flooding. It also plays an important role in providing water quality protection in the catchments by filtering pollutants such as sediments, nutrients, organic and inorganic matters and bacteria.

Bangladesh is a signatory to RAMSAR convention, which embodies the commitments of member countries to maintain the ecological characters of their wetlands of international importance and to plan for the wise use, or sustainable use, of all their wetlands in their territories.

Unscrupulous development activities are destroying our wetlands' ecosystem. The immediate results are the loss of

biodiversity, excessive flooding and drainage problem. Bangladesh is at high risk of climate change impacts. To protect our biodiversity and become more resilient in the future against climate induced vulnerability we need to give much importance in preserving our wetlands.

Md. Faruk Hossain
Agriculture Extension Officer
On e-mail

Elegy to a younger sister

My younger sister loved me very much. She always prayed for the well-being of her elder brothers. She lived in a village with her 3 children, husband and in-laws. When she died (3 weeks back) at the age of 32, her youngest son was 5-months-old. She never expressed her pains and sufferings to anybody. She used to tell me on mobile, "I'm keeping well, don't be anxious about me. Take care of yourself and take your meals timely." I know that she was feeling helpless. Her in-laws did not treat her as their daughter. I could not go there to see her because of my official duties. She did not insist on my going there, because she knew that taking leave would be harmful to my

official image. She could read my mind.

After getting information about her sickness, I went there. But by that time she was no more. I appeal to all elder brothers to keep contact with their younger sisters and visit them regularly.

Mobarak Ali
Gopibag, Dhaka

Secularism!

There lives a community of Muslims in a place called Dearborn, Michigan, USA. They are demanding the introduction of Sharia Law there, probably it has already been granted. The majority i.e. more than 80 % of Bangladeshis are Muslims. It is a matter of wonder how such a vast majority of people goes for secularism.

Saleh Ayub
On e-mail

Conspiracy theory

It is my firm belief that if a competition is arranged on 'conspiracy theories', no one will be able to beat Awami League or BNP. We have become tired of this trend and the latest ones are about the train accident in Sirajganj and the army housing project in Rugganj of Narayanganj.

On October 11, 2010 a train ploughed through an opposition rally spilling on the tracks at Sayedabad near Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge in Sirajganj which killed 5 persons and injured many. Opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia was prompt to announce that it was a conspiracy hatched by the government to foil her rally. What a thing to say! On the other hand, the Awami League government is saying that the opposition has done it intentionally to create

anarchy, it was a planned attack on the train. Is the government trying to imply that the opposition purposefully arranged the deaths of those people so that they can resort to violence?

In Rugganj, clash occurred between local people and the law enforcers over the alleged forced land purchase for housing project of the army. The incident happened on October 23, 2010. Awami League Joint Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said at a press briefing that it was a BNP plot; that the BNP was trying to put the army on a collision course with the government and the people by orchestrating such incidents.

We do not expect this sort of irresponsible remarks from our leaders.
Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Taxes on cars

I just want to address a few things regarding taxes on cars. If after reading Mr. Ayub's letter you thought that in Texas or in the US people do not pay taxes when purchasing a vehicle, then you have been completely misled. In Texas or US, regardless if it is old or new, you have to pay tax (which is based on the price of the car) at the time of purchase. And that is just the beginning of taxes.

One of the most popular post purchase tax is Fuel Tax; it is a tax that is added to the price of fuel, so if your car runs on oil then for every gallon or litre of oil that you pump into your car you are automatically paying the taxes. On average in the US, for every litre of fuel one pays 12 US cents (this includes both State Tax and Federal Tax). And wherever there isn't a tax there is a fee (e.g. road and bridge fee, oil disposal fee, tire disposal fee, just to name a few).

Now about income tax, let's think logically, can a person making Tk. 8,000/- annually really afford a car? I do not believe it is remotely possible. Also, does the government really tax anyone making Tk. 8,000/- or less? Of course not. That would be insane. Even in the US, an individual making less than \$9,000 is not required to file taxes, so why would anyone living on less than Tk. 8,000/- be expected to pay taxes? Moreover, the refund that you are talking about happens only when an individual paid more taxes than they should have; an individual applied and qualified for credits and/or deductions; or if the government declares a stimulus payment. Ask a local accountant for more information regarding refunds on taxes.

In essence, I understand that some people are upset or outraged over the increase of tax, but let's face it. Bangladesh is not the only country that has imposed taxes on vehicles.

Shahid Zaman
On e-mail

A strong message

After a long time the cricket world has seen one of the cricket giants of the world (New Zealand) struggling to save the series against the formidable Bangladesh cricket team. Probably this is the first time Bangladesh has won a series and brushed aside the opponent. However, it is a strong message of the Tigers to the stronger

opponents before the world cup.

Soon after this win we got good news that Bangladesh opening batsman Tamim Iqbal has been selected as the Test Player of the Year by the Wisden Cricketer magazine. We have already seen the unparalleled Shakib, the heart of Bangladesh cricket, who has become so mature.

The Tigers have been outstanding in the field throughout the series. These are really some solid indications of consistency and hard work of our cricketers.
Mohammad Zia-ul-Haque
English Department
International Islamic University Ctg.

Parks and playgrounds

Playing is one of the important needs of the children. It is essential for developing their creativity. Recently the PM directed the authorities concerned, to take immediate steps to recover all the children's parks and playgrounds in the city. We appreciate the PM's concern about our children.

Rahad Jannatul Islam
Jagannath University

Help the cyclone victims

Recently the PM promised to give plots and cars to the cricketers of Bangladesh for winning a series. I think it is the duty of every player to try their best to win every series. So, they did their job. We do not understand why the PM is giving all the players plots and cars.

Our people, affected by Sidr and Aila, are still struggling to survive in the southern areas of the country. If the PM had given the affected people that amount of money instead, they would have been much benefited.

Rowshan Ali
On e-mail

Child labour

A couple of days ago, on my way back home I met a ten-year-old kid who works as a cobbler. His name is Rabi Das. I asked him why he chose this occupation at this age. I came to know that poverty had compelled him to do so. His father has died and so his mother and he has to work hard to support the family.

The affluent people of the society should come forward and extend their helping hands for these destitute kids.

Mohammad Hasan Tareq
Dept. of English
Chittagong College

Bring the stalkers to justice



govt. should arrange campaign programmes about the fate of the stalkers, after their punishment, as a warning to other young mischief mongers. Awareness programmes should also be organised to protest eve-teasing.

Stalkers are so desperate that they don't bother to kill the guardians or protesters. It has to be ensured that nobody supports the stalkers. The government should think about it seriously and we all should say "NO" to eve-teasing.

Md Zahidul Islam (Milton)
Bangabandhu Law College, Dhaka

Stalker Devashish Saha Rony killed a mother because she protested the stalking of her two daughters. This barbarous incident happened just two weeks after the murder of lecturer Mizanur Rashid of Natore. In both cases the guardians wanted to solve the problem but failed. I can strongly assert that the culprit Rony was motivated by the incident of Natore and followed the same "method". If the perpetrator of Natore incident could be arrested and brought to justice quickly, Champa Rani Bhowmik would not have to die in this way.

If one crime goes unpunished, it would definitely give rise to another. If we fail to arrest the criminals and bring them to justice quickly, very soon more people would lose their lives in similar manner.

The two incidents clearly indicate that stalkers have now become very ferocious. If necessary, the RAB and police must be given new assignments to go after the stalkers.

Pradip Das
Lecturer
BHPI, CRP



Population, the peril

Psychologically, human beings are often blind to the most obvious. A story goes that once Mullah Nasruddin came to a tavern and exclaimed, "It is the moon which is more important for mankind than the sun", and sat down to order some food. His followers gathered round him pleading with him to explain his remarks. He shouted at them, "The moon gives us light at night when it is dark, but who needs the sun during the day when it is already bright!"

Our political and intellectual leaders similarly cannot see the most obvious, because without the problems created by expanding population, they all would be out of their jobs.

With unemployment, poverty, ill health, lack of education, difficulty in enrolment in schools, traffic accidents, pavement hawkers, muggings, murders, corruption,

extortion etc, gripping the land, which are really auxiliary problems ensuing from the main problem of over-population, those who are in charge of solving these smaller problems will all be out of their jobs if they don't succeed. So they are all psychologically blind to the obvious main problem and have a vested interest in perpetuating such blindness.

The authorities must therefore without any delay officially acknowledge that population increase is the main problem and develop effective accountable mechanisms to deal with it, with similar recognition from all other subsidiary departments and work programmes in the country and gain their full cooperation to achieve a target of fast-declining population.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

The government should take punitive action against the stalkers immediately by detecting and punishing the actual culprits. This is totally intolerable and has to be dealt with an iron hand. Capital punishment should be given to the perpetrators, and at the same time the victims and their families should be compensated financially which is to be paid by the perpetrators or their guardians. This should be monitored by the law enforcing agencies.

As a student of law I suggest a few judicial magistrates be immediately appointed in each district for quick disposal of the cases. We need to amend our law in this regard to ensure that the punishment would be the most severe. It seems that the stalkers' parents or guardians are not aware of their children's day-to-day activities. In this case, I want to suggest that the govt. and the authorities concerned hold the guardians of the stalkers to account also.

Moreover, the various agencies of the