

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 200 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

118% increase in electricity price!

I am a service holder with a fixed income and head a family of six members. My electricity consumption varies from 300 to 400 units per month depending on circumstances. I do not operate any A/C except normal electrical devices like fans, tube lights/CFL, refrigerator, etc. In January last, I paid an electricity bill of Tk.1, 196/- for 305 units (@Tk.3.92 per unit). But in March, 2012, I received an electric bill amounting Tk.3, 453/- for 406 units (@Tk.8.51 per unit) which means an increase of 118% in unit price! The government claims that it has nominally increased electricity price and will increase it further to offset the subsidy! Will you call a 118% increase within two months a nominal increase? Is there nobody to look after such unjust course of arbitrary price increase by BPDB? What role the Energy Regulatory Commission plays by their so-called public hearings? I would like to draw your kind attention to make some investigative reporting on the subject for the benefit of the people of fixed income like me.

K. Gyasuddin
 Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

Commuters suffer as garment workers block highway

It has been published in the DS on 17th April that a few hundred workers of a garment factory gathered on an important road of the city leaving thousands of people stranded during busiest hours of the day. It was a sequel to other protest rallies carried out by the workers a few days ago. These repeated disturbances can not continue at the expense of the common people's time and livelihoods. The government should take stern action against the people responsible for this sort of obstruction to our day-to-day life. The problem was created by the owners of the apparel factories for their non-payment of salaries to the workers.

Monzur Rahman
 Mohammadpur
 Dhaka

PCB's insistence

I cannot understand why the PCB is insisting on our team's going to Pakistan. They have also threatened us that they will break all ties with Bangladesh if our team don't tour to Pakistan. My question is have they broken ties with all the Test playing nations? As far as I can see, no cricket team is travelling to Pakistan. I agree with Bangladesh national team's coach that our boys are being used as part of an "experiment". I don't think Pakistan can guarantee 100% safety of our players. Who will take the responsibility if our players are attacked by insurgents and they lose their lives?

Aminur Rahim
 Mohakahli, Dhaka

Autism increasing!

The other day I was reading a medical newsletter wherein it was stated that the number of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ADS) cases among American children is increasing, the ratio being 1 in 88 children. It was found through research and investigation that certain environmental factors including toxic overload is responsible for increased cases of autism. Excessive exposure to electromagnetic radiation, mercury toxicity, vaccine damage, Vitamin D deficiency are some of the major environmental factors contributing to the development of autism among children. Electromagnetic radiation (EMR) from cell phones, cell towers, Wi-Fi devices and other similar wireless technologies is suspected to be working in conjunction with genetic and environmental factors and causing autism among children.

What to do now? In Bangladesh, we hardly maintain any safety code or follow precautionary measures while dealing with above mentioned devices and technologies. Perhaps it's time authorities concerned took appropriate action to regulate environmental factors so that their harmful effects may be controlled. Increasing awareness of general people about these factors is also needed.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
 Dean, Faculty of Agriculture
 Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
 Dhaka



PHOTO: ZAHEDUL KHAN

Echo sheets: A viable plywood substitute!

A short write-up and small photograph of the product (echo sheet), were published in a local English daily on 11th April. This product has the potential to be produced locally and will be a very useful and echo-friendly substitute for plywood as well as plastic sheets! Interestingly, the product was launched in UK in January 2010, and after two years this is the first time that I came across this very interesting product which could be a popular and useful material for our housing, furniture and other sectors! The write-up also clearly indicated that it is an environment-friendly product since it uses non-degradable waste plastics as its main raw material!

This will greatly help us in cleaning up our environment as well as making a useful material out of this non-disposable waste product, now polluting our environment! It can be a ready substitute for timber planks and boards for the furniture and similar miscellaneous uses.

The biggest advantage of Echo Sheet is that it will save our trees which is the basic raw material for plywood! This will stop the indiscriminate cutting of trees for manufacturing plywood, boards and sawed timber planks, widely used in various constructions!

I strongly urge the government to see that the material is tested and evaluated by BCSIR and create public awareness about this potentially useful product. Our entrepreneurs and industrialists should also be encouraged and given support to go for manufacturing this product and help in useful recycling of all the waste plastic that creates problems for effective disposal and is a potential threat to our environment! Further, our information ministry should mobilise the print and audio-visual media, so that the product and its usefulness receive wide publicity!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
 Dhaka

The alluring job...

It is indeed very appreciable that Sheikh Hasina brought Suranjit Sengupta back. But after talking so much about ethics, values, and dignity, it is not clear to us how Suranjit Sengupta accepted the position again. Yes, we understand that the ministerial post is alluring and irresistible. It is granted that once you are a minister, there would be no threat of losing job, no performance evaluation, no fear of warning in case of failure etc. Once you are a minister, nothing can touch you. No matter what happens, you will never lose your job, even if you resign, you will be brought back.

Tozo and Bonnie
 One-mail

Where is the driver?

Railway Minister Suranjit Sengupta had to leave office after only five months in it. He had to step down by the instruction of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for Tk 70 lakh found in the microbus of his APS, alleged to be bribe money from the job-seekers.

At first, the case seemed to be a simple one, a disgruntled driver spilling the beans. After entering the BGB Headquarters, the driver Ali Azam attracted the attention of the BGB personnel about the money in the vehicle. Now the disappearance of the main actor seems very strange. No one knows where he is. We learned from the newspapers that his family has become distraught as Ali Azam did not contact them. BGB said that he was released the next day, but Commandant Enamul Huq, who was also in the microbus and was detained by the BGB, said that BGB did not release Azam. It's very fishy... what could have happened to him?

People want to know the truth. The government must make everything clear through holding an effective investigation without delay.

Nur Jahan

Restore educational environment in BUET

Teachers of BUET have been on strike since 7th April boycotting all academic activities. As a result, commencement of the next term is delayed. In the last press conference the teachers' association urged the VC and Pro VC to resign. Political influence on the administration and alteration of results are the major allegations brought against them. In the circumstances, BUET has reached a deadlock, threatening the career of over 5000 students. Though previous academic year started in February, it is doubtful whether the new academic year may start even in May. Last year teachers boycotted classes demanding elevation of retirement age which was followed by students' urge for delaying the exams. This is how education life is prolonged in BUET. SUST has almost completed half of its academic year while BUET students are sitting idle. If this deadlock is allowed to aggravate, thousands of meritorious students will have to pay the price. I respectfully urge the education minister will put his foot down to put an end to the ongoing deadlock.

A tensed BUET student
 One-mail



PHOTO: PANORAMIO.COM

Safety measures for nuclear plants

It is said that electricity produced from 3 tonnes of coal or 2.5 tonnes of fossil fuel can be produced from only one gram of uranium. But as it is an advanced technology, only 32 countries so far in the world could generate power from it. We have heard that Bangladesh is setting up two 1,000-megawatt nuclear plants at Rooppur with Russian technology.

However, disasters related to nuclear power plant have become a great concern all over the world. There have been three major accidents in the 50-year history of civil nuclear power generation. These are: 1) Fukushima (Japan 2011), 2) Chernobyl (Ukraine 1986), 3) Three Mile Island (USA 1979). It is noteworthy that these are the major accidents to have occurred in over 14,500 cumulative reactor-years of commercial nuclear power operation in the world.

Anyway, we have learnt that to achieve optimum safety, nuclear plants in the western world operate using a 'defence-in-depth' approach, with multiple safety systems supplementing the natural features of the reactor core. The key aspects of the approach are: high-quality design and construction, equipment which prevents operational disturbances or human failures and errors developing into problems, comprehensive monitoring, diverse systems to control damage to fuel and prevent significant radioactive releases, and provision to confine the effects of severe fuel damage to the plant itself.

We hope our government will give emphasis on the highest level of safety measures during setting up the plant and generating power from it.

Mobarak Ali
 RK Mission Road, Gopibagh, Dhaka

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's *The Daily Star* news report headlined "Bus was parked, driver asleep"

GS Hossain

This is utterly disgraceful and inhuman, it cannot go on like this.

ShamimH

Rational behaviour has escaped our political parties.

Blind

Are they humans or beasts? Shame on them!

Soud

How can anybody be so cruel? What was this unfortunate driver's fault? We know that there will be no investigation. It seems that the whole world is a big killing zone.

Towhid Salam

This is outrageous. The government should be able to find the culprit.

Dev Saha

What is next? Set fire to one's house?

Shafiq Ahmad

At the end of the day they will claim that their hartal programme was a success. This is the way how they force the general masses to observe hartal. How shameful! How ruthless! No wonder they will further claim that the driver was their party activist and was torched to death by one of the government agencies.

Harun Rashid

The BNP called hartal because they believe that the government is behind such shameful disappearances but what do they think they are doing when they kill a poor driver in broad daylight? Honourable opposition leader, take responsibility for the killing and take his family's responsibility for the rest of their lives.

Kowser A Khan

Offence is a human behaviour that tends to increase in an environment where the offender is free from retribution. Nothing happened to anybody in the past for the similar offence including the gruesome incident at Shahbagh where six innocent passengers were burned alive. Our leaders are the luckiest in the world to have millions of blind supporters and they can easily exploit 16 crore people.

Truth Teller

This is what democracy looks like in Bangladesh. Here, the party in power has freedom of abusing power, freedom of corruption, freedom of extortion, freedom of looting, freedom of toll collection, freedom of abduction, freedom of killing, freedom of silencing the opposition, etc. etc. On the other hand, the opposition parties have freedom of destruction and freedom of killing.

The party in power and the opposition parties have all kinds of freedom, but the people of Bangladesh do not have freedom of speech and freedom of movement. Above all, they do not have the basic rights including safety of life and property.

Qiufang Huang

The innocent members of the public are always destined to die miserably at the whim of the so-called patriotic politicians. I do not believe that Ilias was picked up by any government agency to be killed. He must have been picked by some of his personal enemies.

No government in the world has ever been able to prevent such crime. It is never possible for any government anywhere in the world to guard every citizen from causing him harm or death by others. There are laws and law enforcing agencies to take care of that. The hartal will not bring the victim back, if he is not already killed.