

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.

Garment factory fires: Here and in the USA



PHOTO: AFP

The Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire in New York City in 1911 caused the death of 146 garment workers, mostly women and children. Many jumped to their deaths because the doors were locked to prevent stealing. The fire at Tazreen Fashions in Dhaka in 2012 has killed 111 workers, mostly women. Most of them died because the factory doors were locked to prevent stealing. The two fires prove that Bangladesh is lagging behind at least one hundred years from the USA.

The Triangle Shirtwaist factory disaster caused the US federal government to implement industrial safety standards laws. Will Bangladesh government implement safety standards law? Or will the law remain blind as usual to those who were responsible for the deaths of so many workers?

Faruque Hasan
Alaol Avenue
Uttara
Dhaka

Crop production under permaculture

We are living in a world of uncertainty as far as climate and agriculture are concerned. Although there are a handful of scientists who disagree, but available evidences suggest that climate change is a real threat to sustainable agriculture, particularly food crop production system. Climate changes are occurring dramatically over which we have almost no control. This phenomenon is visible in the occurrence of frequent natural disasters (recent cyclone Sandy in the USA is an example,) which are due to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The world population is increasing geometrically and so the food production will have to be doubled to feed the increasing population.

Meanwhile, in order to face the emerging problems caused by climate change, growing food crops in permaculture system can be an effective option. Permaculture is a branch of Applied Ecology which has been drawn from a number of disciplines including agro-forestry, organic farming, ecological engineering, environmental design and sustainable development. Permaculture takes care of the earth, people and natural resources and ensures sharing of surplus resources among human beings. If we can follow permaculture system for producing food crops, it will ensure maximum utilisation of our natural resources which include land, water, sunshine, etc.

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

Waiting for the next Hay Festival

I am one of those lucky persons who participated in the Hay Festival and got the opportunity to meet many distinguished personalities of the country and abroad. The whole programme was organised in a very systematic way. I have found many foreigners who were very pleased to have joined the festival. This festival will definitely encourage many new writers of the country. I came to know that our country has already progressed a lot in the field of English literature. I am eagerly waiting for the next Hay Festival to and strongly believe that next time there will be more participation. I feel this festival is a great achievement for our country.

Pradip Das

Take exemplary action against culprits

In Bangladesh, corruption has already reached the peak. The Bahaddarhat accident in Chittagong city is a clear example of it. This is not the first time that the flyover collapsed. If the government had taken strict action after the first accident, maybe it would not have happened for the second time. As usual, our government will form an inquiry committee but the investigation result may seem absurd to us. And the real culprits will roam free. Not only that, they will prepare themselves for future crime. It is high time the government took exemplary action against the culprits.

Saira Bashar
Chittagong



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Citizenship of Rohingyas

History tells us that Rohingya people's ancestors lived in the western part of erstwhile Burma even before the first Anglo-Burmese war that broke out in 1823. Since then the Rohingyas have been living there generation after generation. By any standard or consideration, the Rohingyas are the true sons of the soil and deserve to be treated as full citizens of Myanmar.

But we fail to understand why Myanmar authorities have all along been refusing to accept the Rohingyas, a small ethnic minority, as rightful citizens of the country. We also find it utterly disappointing as to why and how Myanmar president Thein Sein could think that mass deportation of the entire Rohingya community was the only solution to the problem!

Since Bangladesh is worst-hit by the influx of the stateless Rohingyas who are fleeing Myanmar to escape gross injustice, abuse and persecution, our government should take the initiative to resolve the problem. We think our government should raise the Rohingya people's citizenship issue in the United Nations, seek help of all influential countries, human rights organizations, OIC and other international forums to convince and compel the present Myanmar government to give the Rohingyas their long-due citizenship right.

Md Mohsin Ali
Nutan Courtpara, Kushtia

Replace the defective lights

Kanchpur, Meghna and Daudkandi are three important bridges at different points on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway. I recently noticed that some of the lights on these bridges are not working, which may cause serious accidents. Therefore, I, on behalf of the people, draw kind attention of the authorities concerned to the matter and urge them to replace the lights.

Tanbir Uddin Arman

Let it be a lasting ceasefire



PHOTO: AFP

After the deaths of 160 Palestinians, including 10 of a family and 5 Israelis during a few days' conflict, a ceasefire has been announced with the effort of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi. It is reported that US President Barack Obama spoke to the Egyptian President and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on the night of November 19, 2012. We were very upset about the escalation of violence and are now feeling relieved by the news of ceasefire. We hope the ceasefire will not be temporary; the world leaders must take steps to make it permanent. The Palestinians are the victims; they are deprived of their land and have been living under occupation for so many years. They have the right to live with dignity. The USA, the Arab countries and others must try to execute a two-state plan so that Palestine and Israel can exist side by side in total harmony. This is the only solution to permanent peace and we hope Israel will not object to it.

Nur Jahan, Chittagong

Save our culture

I have been noticing for some time that some cinema posters and billboards of diamond jewellery, body spray, boutique, beauty products, etc., are really objectionable. The general public feel ashamed to look at those billboards. Not only that. Advertisements of these products are also being aired on television channels regularly. In the entertainment pages of some newspapers, obscene photos are published. Our culture is being influenced by foreign culture in such a way that it has become hard to find a movie or entertainment programme that we can watch together with our families.

I think the government of Bangladesh should take this matter seriously and take steps to save our own culture.

Maliha Jainab
Class XI, Viqarunnisa Noon College

Provide Braille books for free

We have learnt from a report of this daily on a roundtable entitled "Barriers to mainstreaming of children with disabilities in education" held at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka that Braille books which are used by the visually challenged students are pretty expensive. The report also reveals that there is no specially designed curriculum in schools for the physically challenged children.

The world has more than 1 billion physically challenged people which are 15 percent of the total population of the world. Whereas in the 2011 census, only 1.4 percent of 14 crore people in Bangladesh had been recorded as so challenged. Even, as per the 2011 report by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, Bangladesh has around 1.9 million physically challenged people (!). In fact, no plan and initiative will give proper result without having accurate statistics.

However, it is praiseworthy that Bangladesh is going to participate for the first time in the upcoming T20 World Cup for the visually challenged in Bangalore. We hope Bangladesh government would work with the experts to design the right curriculum for physically challenged children and with the NGOs for providing Braille books free of charge to the visually challenged students.

Mobarak Ali

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's *The Daily Star* news report headlined "Fire check frustration"

Robin

Nothing will change unless you introduce fear factor, Mr Salam. Do you have the courage to shut those factories and send the authorities to jail and fine them heavily? It appears that most Bangladeshis can be bought with money. Can you prove that you are an exception?

Sheikh Monirul Islam, Opee

That is not a leak, that's a disaster. We better take the matter very seriously and professionally. I think with correct leadership we can do the job ourselves; do not need help from American trade department.

Anonymous

The 15 teams that have been formed to check the garment factories all over the country may have to visit each factory several times to ensure that they are maintaining the safety measures properly.

Jahangir

Cancel their licences please.

Barkat

Let a few weeks pass. When people will forget this worst factory fire in Bangladesh and the news headlines will change, all the factories will start doing business in the same way until the next tragedy happens.

Misbah Uddin Sumon

We are a developing country and our garment sector is developing fast, but the owners of the garment factories don't follow the safety regulations. It is a bad luck for Bangladesh.

RCH

Just a thought -- how many building permits were given in Dhaka violating fire safety codes? Another question is do we really have any fire safety codes? Can The Daily Star get this from RAJUK or Fire Service and publish it?

N. Alamgir

I am sure these checks, which should be done on routine basis, will find many more of these factories with no or negligible safety arrangements. These garment owners live in lavish style but they care so little for the workers. Safety of workers has always been a neglected issue in our industries. Discontent among workers may prove to be very dangerous and damaging to Bangladesh.

Rubel

Government has to make sure that all the gar-

Break the deadlock at IU!

After a long vacation, Islamic University opens, but regretfully our honourable teachers have declared not to take classes sine die. They are on a strike demanding the resignation of the present vice chancellor along with pro-VC and treasurer. A handsome amount of public money is being spent for our education every year. Moreover, the hard-earned money sent by our parents is being wasted. If this situation continues, meritorious students will be reluctant to get admitted to IU. I urge the university authorities to break the deadlock as fast as possible considering the sufferings of the students.

Md Nazmul Haque
Dept. of English
Islamic University
Kushtia

Repair the Khulna-Satkhira road

It takes almost 3 hours to go to Satkhira from Khulna due to the bad condition of the road. If the road was in good condition, it would take 45 minutes. Several reports were published on the matter in the national dailies but no steps have been taken to repair the road. We, the people of this area, have tried many times to draw the MP's attention to this major problem but didn't get any response from him. MPs forget their voters after winning the election. Should we vote for him in the next election? No one can blame us if we don't. MPs should always keep in mind that people are no fools. They now have options to make a better choice.

Snawara Shimul
Khulna