

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.

Leaders, look what you have done!

I work for a company in San Francisco as a Sr. Software Engineer. I used to proudly speak to my co-workers about my country and its role in anti-terrorism activities. I used to tell them about my experiences in UN mission in Bosnia and our role to bring peace in that war-torn region and how actively our country responded to the Gulf War as one of the first few countries. I had no valid words to counter when one of my co-workers asked me today about the inclusion of Bangladesh on the INS list. My pride and my heart are torn apart after Bangladesh is enlisted as a terror risk country. Do our leaders realise what damage they have done to us?

However, we need to repair this damage immediately. Our PM should personally look after this matter. She should immediately visit USA not for her party politics this time but to save Bangladesh from this disaster and from further disaster as the ripple affect of this disaster.

Delwar Hossain  
USA

"Well done Sheikh Hasina!"

Congratulations to Sheikh Hasina in her tireless endeavour to demonise a section of the people of Bangladesh after they soundly rejected her and her party. Her tireless efforts to portray Bangladesh as a breeding ground for international terrorists and terrorism in the course of her numerous trips abroad seems to have paid off. We remember well the allegations she made to the British government officials during their visit to Bangladesh about infiltration of "Taliban elements" in the BNP government. We also remember her efforts to blame the blast in the Ramna Batamul on "Islamic elements" during her years of rule. Could she please tell us where those Islamic culprits are hiding?

When she came to the US on a state visit to meet with President Clinton, she was mentioned in the Washington Post as the "Prime Minister of an impoverished delta nation". This one line recognition for Bangladesh appeared in the events section right before an announcement for a Cuban dance troupe that was also visiting the DC area during the same week. Now due to her efforts, Bangladesh is the fodder of many news broadcasts!

Shomit Choudhury  
Massachusetts, USA

Being a leader of the opposition party from a poor third world country, Sheikh Hasina has successfully managed to convince the administration of the world's only super-power to list Bangladesh as a "terror risk" nation! Previously, she had single-handedly convinced European Union to pass a resolution condemning the so-called repression by our Govt! It seems that Sheikh Hasina's diplomatic influence remains in the world arena although she is no longer representing the Bangladeshi Govt.

I wonder if the world body is still unaware of the new 4-party alliance Govt that runs our country! Influential members of our present Govt are still suggesting that it is Sheikh Hasina who is responsible for our "image crisis". I would ask our diplomatic missions to confirm if Sheikh Hasina is still being considered as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in their respective mission countries! While clearing this misconception, the ruling party would also be better off concealing the fact that we have two Taliban sympathiser ministers in our cabinet. Do not bother mentioning about human rights issues (e.g. Indemnity, minority persecutions etc.).

Unless we disclose these deeds by our Govt., I doubt whether the US intelligence would ever be able to find out about these internal matters of our country!

T Sengupta  
NY, USA

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Some of us, who are trying to turn the US INS registration issue into a anti-Hasina frenzy presume that the Americans are fools: Bangladesh is included in the Justice Department's list because of Sheikh Hasina's efforts to "portray Bangladesh as a terrorist" state.

However the reality is little different. US Department of Justice's decision to include Bangladesh in the list is based on its own criteria, not on Sheikh Hasina's "ill-motivated" efforts. CIA has opened a 5-member office in Dhaka to collect intelligence (see Alex Perry's Time magazine article October 20, 2002). CIA knows exactly who is where.

In any case, we should always bear in mind that we have failed to establish Bangladesh as a truly secular nation for which Bangladesh had emerged in the first place. Now we have to suffer the consequences.

Murtad-ul Islam  
Cambridge, USA

License to kill!

As the ruling party says, Operation Clean Heart will be called in if law and order situation deteriorates

Bangladesh on INS list

Several letters appeared on the subject in your January 20 issue. While we sympathise with the sentiments and share the sense of surprise or even outrage let us also be rational and objective.

In the current mood of over-reaction and even obsession with homeland security in the US administration, it would be naive to expect anything else. Equally naive and misplaced would be the notion that some statements by the opposition leader of Bangladesh, unfortunate though these might have been, brought about this result. That underestimates the decision-making process by the US and gives credit to those who have not earned it.

Indeed, the episode shows few things of which we should be more concerned. For one, our mission in the US should have had some advance clue which obviously it did not. Second, our diplomats in the foreign office should engage energetically first to do damage control and then to lobby strongly and tactically to reverse the US decision. Third, Bangladesh government may focus on specific actions at home that are clearly visible, unambiguous and above all convincing to the public at home and the world community at large. The onus lies mainly with the Home Affairs Ministry to put our own house in order.

Hussain, Dhaka

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It is not just a disgrace for the nation, it will have disastrous impact on Bangladesh. Its economic impact will be huge. It will push us back to many years. And who is responsible for it?

First of all it was not unexpected at all. It's no secret that after

9/11 incident, the war against terror rightly or wrongly has gone against the Muslims. So, there was always a possibility of restrictions even on Bangladesh. There is no doubt most Bangladeshis are very tolerant and moderate Muslims but at the same time it is also true that some radical, extreme fundamentalist elements do exist in our country. The only way we could (possibly) avoid the restriction is taking actions on those radical groups. But unfortunately our government did the opposite. They rewarded those extremists by not taking any action against them and punished the people who are progressive, secular and anti-fundamentalists. The government didn't even bother to investigate a single incident which came in local and international media. The government and some people tried to promote the theory that those people and Sheikh Hasina damaged our image. Is Sheikh Hasina so powerful to pursue Bush to take some action of her liking?

It is Khaleda Zia and her government who damaged the image of this country by violating all limits of human rights, free media and rule of law. And the whole nation has to pay for it now.

Sonia Mirza, Banani, Dhaka

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It is inconceivable how anybody in his/her (in our case its her) right frame of mind could believe that what the government did or didn't do and for that matter what the opposition did or didn't do had any bearing on the recent decision by the U.S. Government to put Bangladesh on the "list".

might hike us. The leading newspapers, the ETV, and other satellite media were covering all categories of crimes.

I noticed some changes during my recent visit (Mid December) to Dhaka. Friends and relatives made me alert but not alarmed. They talked about the development of the situation after the army deployment but they also referred to the death in custody. It is unwise to conclude that army has curbed all criminals (it is never possible), but I had the feeling during the week stay in Dhaka that common people were happy with the development.

The unfortunate part of the whole story is the death in army custody. End never justifies the means - at least where constitution and law of the country exist. If the military or police can kill a 'criminal' before proving guilty in court, why shouldn't the common people be allowed to do the same?

Earlier the government spokesperson and press releases from military headquarter claimed that no person was mishandled and no death took place under military custody; all deaths occurred due to 'heart attack' or during 'escape

in Dhaka and Chittagong prior to the 1996 national election!

Z. Rahman  
Gulshan, Dhaka

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A free and fair election held at Narayanganj elected a chairman and commissioners after long 18 years. Journalists, election watchers, law enforcers and election officials ensured the fairness of the election.

Thanks to all of them and also to the voters who braved cold weather and hot humour and came out to vote. The ruling party government should also be thanked for their political goodwill to arrange the election in such fair manner. Though this election is fought non-politically but party politics played a vital role in this election. The unofficial Awami league candidate won the election defeating ruling party (Unofficial) candidate by a convincing margin. The B.N.P. leadership should appreciate the swing of the voters, just after one year of national election. This type of elections should guide the political pundits in formulating their future course of action.

Abu Ishmam, Ph.D.  
Columbus, USA

"Activists fight back"

I read with great interest Naeem Mohaieem's article (January 19) about the activists in the US. Although I disagree with the *naïve* peace movement, I certainly respect their right to be ill informed, unwashed and unemployed.

What I did find amusing is Naeem's wholehearted embrace of every loony idea picked up with well fed American's. It always amazes me how rich spoilt unemployed misguided Americans, socialist Europeans and third world NGO's have banded together to ensure that poverty is not eradicated in the third world. After all a protest against globalisation is a protest in favour of poverty in countries like ours.

Maybe Naeem's American friends are ignorant but he should remember how poor Bangladesh was before globalisation brought the garments industry to our country. The masses of 'activists' when not busy trying to take away the livelihoods of third world workers, be they garments workers or coffee planters, or piercing their bodies in imaginative ways while vandalising property, should pick up a book on economics. By that I don't mean the Communist Manifesto etc. How can any rational person be against genetically modified food? GM crops have been tested and used for years in the US. Their introduction in our country would be a great boon for our poor peasants. But Naeem's people of the Great unwashed would have us stay poor and underfed rather than bothering to try and overcome their petty prejudice to scientific advancement.

As for their anti-war demonstrations, the less said the better. If these people had their way, Russia would have long since spread the

"Govt's silence ominous"

The Indemnity Ordinance, the Joint Drive, detention of otherwise socially recognised eminent law-abiding citizens of the country and meting out unprecedented harassment to them -- all tell a story. And now a headline in *The Daily Star* (January 16) reads "Govt's silence ominous" quoting an excerpt from the reactions expressed by the CEC with regard to the Government's deliberate silence on his request for deployment of the army to maintain law and order during the forthcoming Upazilla Elections.

The way the ruling party is trying to run the country, one thing is evident that it has taken a definite vow to ignore any public opinion on any issue and do whatever they feel like doing.

I can only sympathise with the CEC's predicament. If it is of any consolation to his predicament in which he finds himself today I can only sing in unison that we the people are living in no lesser state of stress, confusion and intimidation due to the various undemocratic and highhanded measures taken by the Government.

Shamsher Chowdhury  
Dhaka

"ICS has no place on DU campus"

This is a reply to Mr. Yahya's comments on my previous posting, "ICS has no place on DU campus."

Well, Mr. Yahya, no one should appreciate a DU campus as you depicted. Also equally disturbing is the idea you espoused to equate human freedom with "parato's optimality" that you cannot make someone better off (in this case left-wing student bodies) without worsening others (ICS, I suppose)! Your analogy is an absolute misfit to the topic under discussion.

Freedom of speech is not something you trade as a market stock. It's the God bequeathed right on every human being; neither you can give it, nor can you take it away. Perhaps, your left-leaning mind is yet to accept the fact that human dignity, freedom of speech, be it of an individual or of a social group, are anything but "labour". As our celebrated economist Dr. Yunus rightly put it, 'a fundamental flaw of traditional economics'.

Re. your reference on CU and RU campus experience, I can reflect upon my own being a CU alumni, albeit more than a decade ago. I had the first hand account of witnessing student politics of all hue and notoriety, right and left, pro as well as anti-government. No one is free from the onus of misdeeds including the ICS.

Nonetheless, having seen all from a distance, I can assure you that, on a comparative scale, the onus of proving innocence is way higher for the left leaning student



Combating crisis?

All of us in the U.S. knew that it was just a matter of time before the proverbial axe falls on our collective necks too, to have thought otherwise would have been a sign of *naïveté*. If U.S. allies like Kuwait and Bahrain could be on the list, what on earth would leave the third largest Muslim country off it?

Anwar Babar  
Dallas, TX, USA

bodies than would be the case for ICS, which was also mentioned by Mr. Khairul from Surrey, UK, on this subject. It is simply wrong to squarely blame ICS alone while giving others a free ride.

As for the student politics, it should be banned *sine die* since all student parties have failed to live up to their respective ideals. Should a need emerge for their revival someday, they all including the ICS shall be equally liable in maintaining congenial academic atmosphere. Better yet, if we could bid 'farewell to politics with arms and muscle power' all together, an evil contender against our sane selves. Hope, we can all agree to this at the very least.

Abu Ishmam, Ph.D.  
Columbus, USA

virus of communism all over the world. Thanks to the fact that visionaries like Maggie Thatcher and Reagan ignored these protesters. These anti-war demonstrations are not very important and will be forgotten after the allied victory in Iraq. Does anyone even remember the huge public protests which rocked Western Europe during Reagan's deployment of the MX missiles? No one. And no one will pay any heed to these appeasers of evil either.

Satyajit, Dhaka

"Police without wheels and human rights violation"

I appreciate your report on 19th Jan '03 on the police facing shortage of vehicles. This is truly a sad story where you have vehicles, you have government owned repair shops and still your vehicles remain out of work.

Yet I feel there could be more news about that could follow. The police usually pick up minibuses, pickups and human haulers. The owners of these transports are not paid a single penny for their losses, moreover the fuel that remain in the tanks at the point of "requisition" is lost. Also, the issue of misuse of such "requisition" papers does not need to be wrote about all over again.

The matter of requisition arises out of need by the government. All the vehicle owners at the point of registration must sign a declaration to have their vehicles available to the government if and when the government requires. There is no law or rule to specify for how many of the vehicle can be kept or on what intervals it can be taken away.

My question is, is this not a violation of human rights?  
Khaled Hasan, Dhaka

Jeffery Sachs

*The Daily Star's* exclusive interview with Mr. Jeffery Sachs is just a rehash of the usual UN inspired ramblings about sustainable development, asking rich countries for help etc.

Not one of the people most involved with the so-called sustainable development ever addresses the real issues. Countries like Bangladesh are dirt poor not because of the whims of the rich countries. We are dirt poor because we are corrupt, wasteful and short-sighted. We are not a poor country at all. Just look at the houses both

here and abroad of our politicians, bureaucrats and even Chittagong port crane operators. We have gas we won't export. We won't let in a private container terminal although that would be a huge boost to our export industries because of trade unions. We keep the price of land artificially high by holding vast estates in government and army hands.

Jeffery Sachs and his fellow travellers are busy publishing papers and holding UN funded summits to discuss the perfectly obvious. Economic growth leads to the eradication of poverty, crime and all the other woes of the world. Economic growth does not come from rich country handouts or summits in resorts with NGOs. Growth comes from the rule of law, transparency and capitalism. And please do not mumble about the environment either. Of course there should be protection for the environment, but it should be rationally balanced with economic growth. If you lumber us with Swedish or US standards we will never grow. We are the ones responsible for our poverty, the best that rich countries can do is guide us in implementing the policies that made them rich. That's the only help we'll need.

Sabyasachi, Dhaka

"War is not the answer"

In reply to the letter from Shuja (January 21) where he has sided-stepped the points which I raised and decided to get personal (asking me to emigrate to North Korea/Iraq). I asked in my letter, on what basis must every country have to be a democracy, the point which I was getting at, was why should democracy be imposed on others (that doesn't sound as democratic behaviour). Democracy is the will of the people, it doesn't mean it should be imposed on the people. If Shuja wants to debate on the fallacies of democracy I am willing to do so. Shuja hasn't answered my point.

Shuja's second point implies that all outstanding civilisations were built on the blood of the defeated, yet these civilisations went on to become outstanding. So now why is America denying Iraq that same opportunity? I am told not to keep on bringing up the fate of the Native Americans, yet the fate of the gassed Kurds is brought up as a 'stick to beat Iraq'.

The reason I bought up the exploitation of blacks is that past events carried out by Iraq are used against them, similarly past events of America need to be brought up. Shuja tries to justify American slave trade by comparing the slave trading of others.

Going back to the point of my original reply (15th Jan), where I pointed out how Shuja was justifying past mistakes of America because they thought at the time it was right, yet it was plain for others to see that it was wrong, similarly what America is doing now is wrong but they think its right.

Abu Nasher, UK

My visit to Bangladesh: An American view

This is in response to a letter by Kathleen Haq of UK (January 15). I am happy that our country has made a big impression on her. I was very touched by her quote, "if smiles were to be turned to gold, then surely Bangladesh would be the richest country in the world." I totally agree with Ms. Haq that the rural areas of Bangladesh are the place to seek resort when our daily life becomes 'too stressful and selfish'.

My view is shaped by a recent trip to a village. I, along with my family, went to visit a relative in Meherpur. We had a wonderful time there amidst the air and sound pollution-free atmosphere, greenery and friendly people. Sadly the day of our return to the capital came too soon. We had been travelling for about twenty minutes on our way to Dhaka, when my mother exclaimed that she had mistakenly left her purse at the relative's house and must get it. Instead of taking the loaded car back to Meherpur, my father, sister and I decided to take a stroll in the village adjacent to the road, while my mother alone went to complete her unfinished business. We walked into an unfamiliar territory but did not feel awkward for long. The villagers, irrespective of male or female, smiled and talked to us. We were told that we had entered their neighbourhood at a dull time when nothing interesting happens. They requested us to visit again in December when the annual 'mela' (fair) takes place. I informed them that we could not visit because we had no friends or relatives in that village, and thus no place to stay. A woman pointed us to her house and said that we could stay there whenever we wished! I was deeply moved by the un-suspicious and selfless nature of the villagers.

Munaser Kamal  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Zia's anniversary



What about the posters?

In the back page of *The Daily Star* (January 20), there is a photo of Khaleda Zia laying a wreath on the grave of President Zia. All well and good.

In the background you can see that the monument has been plastered with coloured posters bearing the photos of Zia. Doesn't that count as vandalism? What does it say of our PM's own standards when she is happily condoning this practice? How much money did BNP budget for coloured posters? When will they remove them? How much will it cost the DCC to remove these posters? How many tons of waste has been generated by this pointless exercise of spoiling public property?

It will be a grand day for our country when our politicians stop defacing our walls and polluting our already filthy city with these pointless posters. The ever-active Environmental Lawyers Association should do something about it.

Emile  
Dhaka