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.

9/11 incident, the war against terror rightly or wrongly has gone

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 coworkers 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 wartorn region and how actively our country responded to the Gulf War as one of the first few countries. 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 disas-

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 superpower 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, minor-

ity 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

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 "illmotivated" 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

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?

Indemnity Act 2003, the army has

already got the message that their

actions, no matter how terrible it is,

would be ratified by post facto

Indemnity Ordinance

We have learnt a great lesson

thanks to Operation Clean Heart.

Although there are superficial

benefits to having the army on the

streets, ultimately they start acting

to re-examine the role of the military

in our country. Let me give you an

example, recently Peru elected a

new president, Alejandro Toledo.

Mr. Toledo has started sending

many of Peru's top heavy officers

corps into forced retirement, the

military budget has been cut by

20%, past human rights abuses and

corruption by the military are being

investigated and the defence minis-

try's land is being sold. Remember

this is Peru, which has only just

defeated the Sendero Luminoso,

We should take this opportunity,

approval

2003

Farhad Ahmed Khan

like brutal occupiers

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

again. With the promulgation of situation.

Now, government has undertaken measures to pass an ordinance to defend the alleged HR violations by the army showing no positive intention to look into how the desired goal of a crime-free society turned into gues-

Army, if should have exclusive regards to common grounds of the fundamental human rights monumentally prescribed in our constitution, should not have taken any measure to what scene it has shaped for itself among those who has lost their loved ones. In many instances, army has made efforts to justify their acts by declaring the victims as criminals. If the government comes in their defence to remain likeable to the army composing provisions that they can impose on the citizens just because they are the rule of majority, what's the use of the constitution then? How could one claim his right to life if such measures provide exclusive defence for army to do whatever it seems right? Where could be the refuse for rise of crying humanity to seek justice if there are violations?

Dhananjoy Roy, New York, USA

Soft voices are now speaking with loud hearts

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 antifundamentalists. 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 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

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".

pers, the ETV, and other satellite

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

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

Earlier the government spokes-

person 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

are now faster than any mis-

sile and they can be far more

effective. A speech can now

be more powerful, and have

more impact, than the most

powerful nuclear weapon on

earth. So there is hope. We

need those in power to deliver

powerful speeches and if they

do not others will need to do it

The unfortunate part of the whole

the development.

do the same?

of crimes.

in Dhaka and Chittagong prior to the might hike us. The leading newspa-1996 national election! media were covering all categories

Gulshan, Dhaka

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

Thanks to all of them and also to the voters who braved cold weather and hot rumour 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.

"Govt's silence ominous"

The Indemnity Ordinance, the Joint Drive, detention of otherwise socially recognised eminent lawabiding 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

"ICS has no place on DU campus"

This is a reply to Mr. Yahya's com-

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 leftwing student bodies) without worsening others (ICS, I suppose)! Your

Freedom of speech is not some-

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 antigovernment. No one is free from the

Nonetheless, having seen all



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 naiveté. 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

"Activists fight back"

read with great interest Naeem Mohaiemen'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

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

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

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 viola-

tion 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 shortsighted. 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 sidestepped 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. Shuia 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 Shuia 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

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. Hag 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 pollutionfree 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

Munasir Kamal Dhanmondi, Dhaka

selfless nature of the villagers.

The reason so many people around the world voiced their objections to the war on Iraq this weekend is quite simple. Peace is right and this war would be wrong, and yet the simple truth of that does not appear to be clear to many

world leaders. So the protestors find it necessary to remind the world leaders (in all countries) about the obviousness of the phrase; "Talking is always better than attacking."

Luckily communications

for them.Right is right and wrong is wrong and all people know the difference. It's too late for might to pretend to be right or for terrorism to make a difference. It's too late for war to settle the score or for nuclear bombs to make a difference. Peace is right, and we can stop the fights and together the protesters can make a difference. All over the world people with soft voices are now speaking with loud hearts. We must stop this war.

Bob Hicks Burlington

the Shining Path, terrorists and is right next to Columbia and the FARC guerrilla camps.

We have to come to realise, and I hope the 43 deaths in custody have helped, that the army we have now is not inviolable. There is room for reform and it is our right to demand this reform. For starters, there should be internal discipline in the army sufficient to ensure that we are safe from the threat of death in the hands of our own troops. Officers who made millions in scams like the frigate and MIG purchase should be

tried. Secondly the prime lands held by the army should be sold off, especially in fast developing areas like Savar. What is more important for our country, the idle Savar cantonment or the hundreds of factories generating thousands of jobs that could take its place?

Cut the defence budget, make our army leaner and more disciplined and sell off their estates for the sake of our economic develop-

Kishore Pasha

Keep the armed force above controversy It's true that the general people

welcomed OCH. People did so because they believed army simply deserves more credibility than the corrupt civil institutions that comply with such responsibility. But, no matter how far they made that goal reach to success, beneath remains huge lines of accusations that almost every day somebody died in custody for how they handled the

Operation Clean **Heart and indemnity**

It is said, "Justice delayed justice denied". But what if people's right to justice is tarnished by promulgating a black law like the indemnity ordinance?

First, the Government deployed the army without showing any regards to the constitution as many intellectuals have opined. But we the common people nevertheless welcomed it, as the objective of OCH was to curb on crime and criminals and to improve the deteriorating law and order situation.

But if all those alleged death in custody during OCH is legitimised by the indemnity ordinance it will pose a threat to humanity. Law itself is going to make us feel unprotected. The government could at least inquire into the mater (the death of 43 people in custody during OCH) showing respect to people's right to know and to seek justice.

I do not know much about constitution. All I know and understand is that I am a citizen of a democratic country and I have the right to seek justice when my right as a human being is violated by anyone let it be the terrorists, the politicians, the policeman or even the army. Ruhee Fariah Sangeeta Mirpur, Dhaka

I travelled to Bangladesh a couple of times between February and December last year. During my first visit, relatives and friends advised me to take special care of my wife and toddler son during shopping or

travelling as the ransom seeker

effort'. If this is the case, the why did the government need to promulgate and indemnity ordinance?

Orange, Australia

Narayanganj Pourashava

election The front-page news coverings of January 17 giving the subject election result with analysis must cause a shock wave to the concerned quarters and the sane elements in particular throughout the country. The result somehow does not seem right with all the reign of terrors said to have been let loose by undesirable elements; the now projected so-called dark-days, picture and order of the time alleged during the previous 5 years rule of Awami

As one who lived in that great river port during its glorious days (when jute/ steamers with associated industries on the banks of Sitalakhya were sights of such beehive activities!), I am sure many old as well as the young citizens would like to have your valuable comments like you always present through your esteemed daily on such unusual developments of national importance. This in no way should be construed as an aspersion on the wisdom of the voters in general of our country who always seem to send the right signal whether we the so-called

clever/intelligentsia like it or not! Hopefully, this must not also be allowed to be followed by what happened in the past after the Awami capture of mayoral positions

ments on my previous posting, "ICS has no place on DU campus."

analogy is an absolute misfit to the topic under discussion.

thing 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'.

onus of misdeeds including the ICS.

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



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 prop-

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