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.

A serious charge

I expected that some of your vigilant letter-writers from within the country and abroad, especially those belonging to the 'Well-done-Hasina' school of thought, would take notice of the letter written by Mr James P. Sheff, an Immigration Attorney from Pennsylvania, USA ("INS registration may help Bangladesh in USA in the long run", January 17) and start a serious debate on the gravity of the charge brought against some of our Embassy staff in the USA. But it looks like they are so convinced about Shaikh Hasina's single handed contribution to the decision by INS that they ignore or decide to overlook the implication of the

charge brought by the Attorney. Unless a serious enquiry is instituted and the alleged corrupt practice is totally stopped, the danger of some real Al-Qaeda men (an Indian, a Pakistani or an Afghan) holding a Bangladeshi passport remain a possibility. So it is to the interest of the Bangladeshi diaspora to demand an immediate inquiry into

AZM Abdul Ali, Uttara, Dhaka

"Whither"

In his letter (January 30) Dr. Maudood Elahi asserted that the word 'whither' is not at all obsolete. He seems to be concerned about the standard of English written by Bangladeshis.

I would suggest that importance should be given on correct construction of sentences. One should distinguish between assertive and interrogative sentences. The last sentence in his letter (I wonder why did Mr. Kim miss the main theme...?) does not seem to be an interrogative sentence, and it should have been properly constructed. **Shamim Rahman** North Fuller Road, Dhaka

"Well done Sheikh Hasina"

This is my response to the letter of Ms. Nabila Idris (January 31). I agree with Ms. Nabila that politics and the politicians have taken a dark side in our country's democracy but we cannot just blame the politicians as we choose them ourselves. It is our responsibility to elect people who can truly protect our identity and reputation, which seems to have failed this time. If Ms Nabila say Jamaat has democratically all the rights to form the government I agree with her, as it has been our decision. But I will say it has been our wrong decision. This puts a theocratic outlook to our secular democracy. I am not meaning that Jamaat has no right to be a part of the government but not as an Islamic party as Bangladesh consists of many religions and tradi-

As Ms Nabila show strong deplorableness towards the actions of Sheikh Hasina, I will ask her what does she think about the rallies, seminars, which were held by the Islamic groups and were on all ternational broadcasting channels. Even when the situation was too sensitive to handle a slogan was also very popular known as "Amra Hobo Taliban". Doesn't it put fire to the cracker?

Before we blame each other for the faults we should first come out of the dense fog, which gives us a hazy view towards the truth. I will say again that blaming each other is worthless and we should indulge ourselves to look forward to a better

Khalid Rahman, Dhaka

"A washed activist"

I was delighted to read Naeem Mohaimen's "Opinion" of January 31. A washed activist like me concur with his views backed by reference to facts which writers like Satvaiit should take note of and get better informed. Let me also suggest to Satyajit to read what Joseph Stieglitz had to say on globalisation of economy in his book "Globalisation and its Discont". This is what he had to say in the preface to the book. "I have written this book because while I was at the World Bank, I saw firsthand the devastating effect that globalisation can have on developing countries, and especially the poor within those

Listed but not blacklisted

countries".

He came to believe that globalisation may have the potential to enrich everyone but the way it was managed, the way in which policies have been imposed upon developing countries without any regard whatsoever to the impact particularly on the poor, leaves much to be desired. That is the fact and not a theory.

Satyajit should note how mercilessly the West has pushed the poor countries to eliminate trade barriers but managed to keep their own barriers against poor countries on one pretext or the other. Free market is not truly free; open market is also not so open. The so-called invisible hand that makes markets work perfectly are prone to nurture imperfect markets where the "giants" swallow up the "pygmies" in the name of globalisation; profligacy reigns over social responsibility, let alone moral rectitude. The litany of duality remains long and has been on for a long time.

If making profit is accepted as the supreme achievement of man then how can you expect the "unwashed. underprivileged, and the loony" will keep quiet and remain in blissful contentment with their lot. And mind you, the legacy of inequity, the perfidy of high rhetoric and low delivery as practised by the West, mainly the US, shall not fool all the people all the time, shall not prevail

become a neighbour if it is geographically joined to another country. For instance, Dhaka to Singapore or Bangkok is of less distance and time than, for instance, New York to San Francisco is even

though they are in the same country. However, I would like to remind the policy makers that each country has its sensitivities. Bangladesh should remember that countries like Thailand, which are predominantly Buddhist, will have an interest in human rights of Chakmas and other groups. Countries like China and Thailand seems to have only begun to take note of our country. And the time is ripe to solve our internal human rights issue.

Employing a Bangladeshi Buddhist ambassador to Thailand will be a great way to strengthen our relation with that country. Prodipto Ghosh, Singapore

Cricket, politics and the ruling party

"An uncompetitive national team beset by political problems. The country's cricket chief was thrown in jail following a disagreement with the government", statement made in The Australian (30/01/'03 p18) on our cricket and the world cup in South Africa. I don't know whether this observation made after any subtle visit of anti-government or anti-state elements, as always

government is using extra manpower to finish the work as soon as possible. I wonder why! We have never seen such commitment and speed from our government in any construction project before.

It is also reported that they are building a mausoleum on the grave of President Ziaur Rahman, a mosque and a conference hall inside the nearby Chandrima Udyan. The whole project is costing about Tk 3 crore. Who is paying for

If I am not mistaken, the only owner of the Sangsad Bhaban and all the land surrounding it, is the "people" of Bangladesh. Yet this valuable public property is being used as certain people's personal property. And on that note, despite so much protest against this project from everyone, why are both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker so silent about it? Surely they can refuse to live in a house that isn't approved by the people. Their silence tells a lot about who these people are and how much they care for Bangladesh and its people.

It is a tragedy that people who are willing to destroy a national heritage and waste a lot of money for their personal indulgence, are supposed to be our leaders and representatives!

Azad Miah Oldham, U.K

I don't think Mr Junaid is a regular reader of The Daily Star. a few months back they had covered a very informative and interesting write-up on the budget allocation for the eradication of mosquitoes. The gist was, while the Mayor kept telling us he didn't have enough budget, the Star made an investigation

budget remained unutilised. Supporting a certain political party or a person is of no use until we admit their flaws that way we can do both the party and the country a big favour.

which revealed that at least half the

Mrs. S Chowdhury, Dhaka

"No to war"

Mr. Satyajit, presented a very myopic opinion on the impending attack on Iraq by a vast, overwhelming military alliance of super powers on a country, that is already savagely ravaged and weakened by over ten years of sanctions. He must not be reading anything but the Bush and Blair media spin

A leaked UN report on what they assess will be the human and material cost, was published by the Guardian on January 29. It says that half a million Iraqis would require medical treatment for direct or indirect injuries. 3.03 million people will require therapeutic feeding. About 900,000 refugees alone will go to Iran, another 2 million disKhan Kabir. USA

"Dossier on America"

Mr. Billy I Ahmed's article "Dossier on America" (January 29) is quite revealing. The Dossier must be a very exhaustive one running into hundreds of pages. Mr. Ahmed has worked hard to make a good gist of it. He deserves credit.

I am a little confused at one figure of ODA. So far I remember, it was decided in the UN in early '80s that the 25 rich countries would give 0.8 percent of their GNP annually as ODA (Official Development Assistance) to the less developed countries. But Mr. Ahmed mentions. "US gives 0.2 percent of GNP for foreign aid, the lowest amongst all donor countries. Internationally agreed upon target is 0.7 percent." The world renowned economist, Dr Jefferey Sachs told the other day, in his exclusive interview with The Daily Star, "Once the rich gave 0.8 percent of their GNP in assistance which totalled \$175 billion. Now, they give only \$15 billion."

Which figure is correct-- 0.7 or 0.8 A.F.G. Mohiuddin

The ruling party

1) Both Awami League and BNP used to torture the opposition when

2) For any failure they used to blame the previous government.

4) Both of them failed to combat the terrorism and criminal activities 5) Both of them failed to improve the

image of our country at home and

6) Both of them failed to keep the price of daily commodities within the reach of the general people

7) Both of the used to take important decision ignoring public opinion. 8) Both of them became unpopular

while in power. 10) Both of them cannot tolerate

freedom of speech.

Ahmed Habib Manzur Buraydah, Saudi Arabia

Price hike and...

I heard the news of fare hike of bus and eviction of the so-called bus counters in the city. While it is justified to increase bus fare (or is it 16% hike while fuel price hike is 14%?) if you narrow down the scope there is no justification of eviction of the bus counter's.

Even the first one is unjustified on the basis of unjustified price hike of fuel. The affect of this fare hike would be certainly on the middle and lower income group. These groups are already feeling the heat of the price hike of daily commodities. And now the bus fare goes up. What's next?

Shakil Akther Dept. of URP, BUET

One Government goes. Another one comes, each time a new government comes promising the voters the world. But as soon as they cling to power all they are interested in is serving self-interest. They come and go on increasing the image (a non-stop claim.) of the country abroad and also go on preaching the increase of GDP in paper from 5 to 8 percent every time. Increase of GDP is possible by increasing the price of most essential items for which livelihood of every people specially the poor who lives on hand to mouth become unbearable. Once the price of fuel could be increased by the government, the price of rice, pulse, fish, meat, vegetables and even water

goes up by leaps and bounds. On the one hand, the government propagates to keep the price of daily commodity stable. And on the other hand, it goes on increasing the price of oil, fuel, electricity and water.

Nur Hossain Bangshal, Dhaka

The government goes on increasing the price of basic commodity, oil, gas, bus fare and it is the general people who suffer the most. The people's salary hasn't raised then how are they to cope up with this price hike? Amanul

Why not privatise Dhaka University?

When should an institution be closed down? We have seen the present government showing their great skills in shutting down one after another institutions showing diverse reasons: those which do not make profits, which are formed with irregularities, which are not following BSTI standards etc. What should we do about another failing institution, Dhaka University?

Dhaka University cannot be closed down; we cannot even think about that. After all, it is a part of our history. It is a part of our national pride. So what should we do?

Dhaka University is drowning; it started drowning for a quite a while and nobody has come up with interests or ideas to save it. The problems underlying this sad decline in education standards there are multifarious: the government is directly interfering in university administration; most of the teachers are not sincere and regular in taking classes; some students do not want to sit for their examinations on time; students get their results published after indefinite period of time; the third and the fourth class employees can blackmail the administration by abstaining from work for days altogether; police has to guard the dormitories throughout the year to prevent (or protect!) entry of outlawed extruders; the majority of the teachers are more active in consulting businesses; some students graduate with a major in armed hooliganism and tender handling; there is budget deficit every year; some teachers withdraw salary when they study abroad and after finishing, they neither return to work nor they give back their salary: etc.

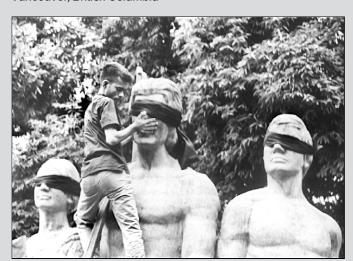
We have not received good formula, guidance or attention from any quarters how to save this university. Some intellectuals opined about banning teacher and student politics to be the only remedy, but no government has the guts to take that risk.

What are the government's thoughts as remedial actions about those public bureau that are not running well? The Finance

and Planning Ministry is prophesising: privatisation will solve all the problems. Privatise T&T, Railway and Banks. Why not privatise Dhaka University? In USA all the top ranked schools are private. Even the private universities are running well in Bangladesh. Surprisingly, the retired vice chancellors and senior professors of DU who could not run DU well, are now running private universities quite efficiently and effectively.

Why not give DU a chance to survive, rebuild and prosper by privatising it? The teachers and staff can be made stockholders, which will make them feel it as their own university.

Hasanat Alamgir Vancouver, British Columbia



Preferring privatisation?

privileged few at the cost of vast the poor but do not insult them by accusing them of ignorance nor dismiss their right to protest. Hussain, Dhaka

Censorship in play

What I find very strange is that for the last three days there has been a block on accessing the Iraqi News Agency web site http://www.uruklink.net/iraqnews/ei ndex.htm, no doubt should war come a total block out of Iraq news will be in force.

Censorship of this war will prove its self on the web Paul Reed,

Manchester, UK

Positive foreign pol-

It is a good idea for Bangladesh to expand ties with other East Asian countries. Trade with China, Thailand and other countries will help reduce dependency on India, and that itself can address the trade imbalance that is often complained about. For too long, India has assumed that they can take for granted an annual profit of \$1 billion

In the day of the Internet, and aeroplane, a country doesn't

and give uninterrupted bliss to the claimed by the government. Our efficient (!) intelligence authority majority. You may have contempt for must act now; how could this secret (!) sneak out?

The government already has stuck several feathers on the country's crown including arresting people and opposition leaders without warrant or court order, ignoring court order, heart attack in custody, indemnity ordinance and inclusion on the list of terror-risk country. However, the government is reluctant to accept the last one, as it's too much for a country in a year! If the government keeps up this attitude, heavier feathers are waiting ahead.

This government seems very keen to improve the plummeting image of the country in overseas. It should inform the nation about the 'image' achievement after ostracising political opponents, teachers. ournalist and reporters without any formidable reason. Tarik Zaman

The University of Sydney Orange, Australia

"Scars on Kahn's dream"

Against all logic and common sense, the government has resumed the construction of two residential units for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker in the Sangsad Bhaban area. What's more, the I am really stunned at the government's indifferent attitude towards public opinion regarding building the Speaker and Deputy Speaker's residence in the JS complex. Why is the government hell bent upon destroying this complex? Isn't there any other place where the residence of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker could be built? Has the government forgotten that they are building these houses with public money and the government must pay heed to people's opinion.

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Wanted: A pied piper for Dhaka city

Thanks to Mr. Haji Mohammad Isam and Mr Amer Junaid for thinking about the issue. I would specially like to thank Mr. Amer Junaid for admitting (though indirectly) that the Mayor has not been able to take any action to solve some of the issues mentioned in my earlier letter.

Who else would know better than myself, that reality is harsher, when you have voted for the ruling party and live to see that they have done so very little to unburden the responsibilities on their shoulders. Isn't it so easy to blame it on the previous government when they have not been able to accomplish a certain task that falls under their job

placed within Iraq. 3.6 million will require emergency shelter. The new, massive and over-

whelming attack planned by the US, is expected to kill 2000 to 50,000 in Baghdad and up to 30,000 more in the northern and southern fronts. Another 33,000 more would be killed if biological and chemical weapons are used. Either Mr Satyajit is completely ill informed or is deliberately staying

oblivious to these holocaust-like counts. He only seems to be worried about the dollar cost to the US and the world economy. He casually, with callous apathy, sideswipe the terrible human cost. Forget Saddam and his cronies. They're but an insignificant number and I personally don't care for him and them. I'd like to see him go, but not at these staggering and unacceptable human cost of civilians.

He then goes on to deride The Daily Star for its anti-war stance and propound his strident support for this massacre on Iraq. I think it is way past time for him to read the other side of the issue, and not succumb to wilful political propaganda of vested interests whose hidden agenda of 'oil interests' is starkly opaque. Time for him to become a pacifist like me and many others, including hundreds and thousands of Americans and British people, whose governments are hell bent on this warpath.

"Women's football"



This is my response to Mr. Atif Alam's comment regarding my previous letter. Mr. Alam has completely misunderstood me. I am not one of those ultra-modern deviant women who totally disregard social customs. All I'm saying is that women should not be considered helpless beings in the society. We should be treated in the same manner as our male counterparts.

By the term 'modern' I do not refer to a place i.e. the developed countries. Modernism does not mean anarchy in the name of liberalism.

By modernism, I mean a changed dimension the way people think, with more acceptance of the new and different. I have six years experience living in a developed country and know that everyone there does not treat women with respect. If someone in US, UK or any other developed country thinks that women should be confined to the house to cook and look after children, I would still regard him as backward. My concept of modernism includes showing tolerance towards those whose behaviour is not exactly in keeping with the mainstream population. Here I'm not just referring to the gender issue. People of different religion, ethnic status etc should be viewed with endurance. If they are different. leave them be, but why fight?

Coming back to the football discussion, no one was forcing the religious fundamentalists to watch the match. The women were not performing a social evil. A modern man, whether he liked the idea of women playing or not, would have avoided the match venue and let the game go on. But to coerce a match to being abandoned, just because the participants were 'different' from the type that the un-progressive people are used to, is a disgrace for the nation.

Munasir Kamal, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

First of all let's get one thing clear. Sports for women, whether football, cricket or gymnastics are permitted for women in Islam. It is also allowed for women to compete in their favourite sport, as long as they follow the wonderful guidelines.

Islam actually permitted women to participate in sports and gave them equal rights over 14 centuries ago. Which is not practised in Bangladesh at all, I am afraid. Those people who say that Bangladesh should be modernised are in fact unaware that if people practised Islam as how it should be, then they would not make these comments. Do most people know that Islam introduced child benefit?

Equal rights, voting and movements for women were introduced in the western world only half a century ago, whereas in Islam it was introduced over 14 centuries ago. Mohammed N Islam, Gtr Manchester, UK

In reference to the letter of Mr Shabbir Khan (January 31) I must say I had to smile. It is always amusing when someone takes sarcasm literally.

I did send a response to Mr. Sakahwat Hossain (January 26) who had responded to my earlier letter regarding this issue (Jan-I found Mr Hossain's response to be that of a knee jerk reac-

tionary type. Hence I responded in a way which I thought would

be funny and at the same time, necessary. The groups of people I reviled according to Mr Shabbir Khan are usually people I myself Perhaps Mr Khan would be wise to read both of my letters (January 24, 27) and then reflect on the matter rather than leap-

ing to an erroneous conclusion and branding me as a reactionary.

I was not shocked, but definitely frustrated reading the incident surrounding women's football. Before I had time to express my protest and concerns on what I thought was done by less educated fundamentalist people, I got shocked to read some of the

letters written by the readers. On January 31st, two letters caught my attention. One was from Mr. Shabbir Khan who criticised Yahva's letter. While I agree with Mr. Khan's views, I must point out that when I read Mr. Yahva's letter. I took it as a sarcastic one - it seemed to me that he was pointing out how ridiculous the incident and the letters sup-

porting the incident were. The second letter that I believe demands a response is the one came from Mr. Atif Alam. U.S.A. has its faults like all other countries and I certainly don't agree with the international politics of the current administration. However, Mr. Alam like many of my fellow Bangladeshis, made a mistake of calling the U.S. morally inferior to Bangladeshis due to "modernity". Morality to some extent may be subjective. However, being citizens of a country that is highly corrupt in all aspects, we hardly have the right to point fingers

The kind of modernity that people like Mr Alam are afraid of can only make things better. Men have ruled our society for thousands of years and look what we have become. Like it or not, women are becoming more and more independent in every segment of our society, and as they become educated and selfreliant, as they achieve more in professional careers and gain more power over their own personal lives, things can only improve. The high divorce rate that you and many of my fellow countrymen like to quote as a "downside of modernity, i.e., women's empowerment" is merely a reflection of the fact that women are no longer forced to stay in abusive or otherwise loveless marriages. If you think that the so-called "family values" are what keep the divorce rate low in countries like ours, you are

Modernism is not a call for moral collapse, but it is a call for freedom of the individual that does not infringe upon others' rights. Feminism is not a fight for special rights, but a struggle for equal rights and equal protection to the half of the population who were born free, but kept in chains made of norms and customs by the male dominated societies. WT. Dallas. USA

I am quite surprised by the letter written by Atif Alam, who has found all the negative aspects of US society but failed to show the positive side of it. I too, have been living in the US for the last 15 years and my experience is completely opposite to what he has observed

The 67% divorce rate which he mentioned, seems high, I think it is more towards 45~50%. But, what he mentioned about the US society, as every moral aspect has collapsed, is far from the truth. The people of the US are overwhelmingly honest, hardworking and friendly. If we ignore our assumptions based on the Hollywood and talk shows, but on the basis of personal interactions and observations, majority of them are law abiding and polite. They are very often helpful and very seldom judgmental.

Here, one class is not given different salary based on their nationality. The reason for high divorce is not altogether immorality. If in our society, a woman could have the means to raise their children by herself, without social stigma, the divorce rate in our country would have been higher as well. The only reason for low divorce rate in our society is their dependence on the male and social stigma. We will be fooling ourselves if we feel that, the male in our society, treat our women with more respect than the people in this modern society do. Finally, in this modern society, which is an impending disaster to happen according to the writer, is surviving as one of the society, where there is justice, there is freedom of opinion and human values. I don't see it to collapse anytime soon.

M. Hassan, Plano TX, USA

Inclusion in INS registration



issue of INS registration and I thought I should let the readers know some of my own thoughts on the issue. I came to USA on student visa only a couple of days before the INS announced the inclusion of Bangladesh in the special registration procedure. Being a person directly affected by the procedure, I still feel that the issue has drawn unnecessary debates and political foul playing back home. INS justifies the procedure

INS is required, within three

tors, students, business travel-

lers, and tourists who enter

and leave the United States

each year. It also requires that, by 2004, ALL official travel documents used to enter the United States contain biometrics identifiers (e.g. fingerprints) in addition to photo identification. This requirement is made necessary given the number of fraudulent documents presented to the INS...." This means that the special

registration will eventually cover all countries in the world whose citizens visit the US, although it is true that only the Muslim countries have been included till now. We cannot make the US exempt Bangladeshis from the registration system (no matter how many trips our Foreign Minister makes to US and how many

times he meets with Colin Powell, Senators and Congressmen). Blaming the other party as to what caused the inclusion will not help either. I personally don't feel US administration gives much weight to what our political leaders are saying. What is needed now is to

make sure that those who are here illegally are not harassed and deported. Our government should try to make the case for granting amnesty to those staying here illegally but do not otherwise have any criminal records. That is what thousands of Bangladeshi families need now.

Zubair Sadeque Duquesne University, USA