

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.

Push-in

I read with serious concern the continuous escalation of border conflict with India. The matter needs urgent attention by both countries at the highest level, before it becomes ugly. The conflict can be resolved peacefully. The Indian claim sounds extremely exaggerated. Bangladesh's assertion that there has not been any migration to India at all also does not sound entirely true.

In order to break the deadlock I suggest the following. It is in the best interest of both India and Bangladesh to resolve the conflict peacefully and amicably.

Let India and Bangladesh agree and meet and select a panel of linguistics, who can ascertain based on the accent and dialect where these people in question hail from. Since Bangladeshi dialect of Bangla is significantly different from West Bengal dialect, it would be easy to identify their original residence.

In the meantime, International Red Cross should intervene to address the plight of the stranded people in the conflict.
M. Faruque, USA

It amazes me that while Mr Y. Sinha clearly defiles the image of Bangladesh in the media by pointing out that Bangladesh is a state that cannot take care of its people, whereas our politicians are taking a swing at one another.

There is not a single sign of unity among our politicians even at times of serious crisis. When will they

ous nine months before the 'Operation Clean Heart' started 2460 people were murdered, 720 women were raped (131 died), a journalist was killed and many manhandled. Killing of children, random toll collection and looting public and private properties became regular than ever.

We know well how criminals and *mastaans* are patronised and protected by corrupt politicians and the police. The politicians, intellectuals and journalists have discussed these matters repeatedly and it is clear from their discussions that lack of good governance is responsible for corruption.

However, after the withdrawal of the army rate of criminal activities have increased again. We agree that the Joint Drive could never be the ultimate step for restoring law and order, but the common people want to live in peace and without fear. For the betterment of the country I hope the people and the government will work together and act responsibly.

Fatima Z Islam, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Much have been said about 'The Joint Force Indemnity Ordinance' that has been promulgated on January 9 legitimising all acts, right or wrong, committed by the Joint Force during the period from October 16 to January 9, leaving people of all spheres enraged and dumbfounded. There is not a single person who claims to be civilised and

other persons in respect of any act done by him in connection with the national liberation struggle or the maintenance or restoration of order in any area in Bangladesh".

This article provides just two grounds (i) national liberation struggle and (ii) maintenance or restoration of order to indemnify any person. It is easily comprehensible that the government has resorted to the later ground i.e. the plea of maintenance or restoration of order to indemnify the Joint Force. But that is not sustainable because the phrase "maintenance or restoration of order" needs to be interpreted from the judicious point of view and in the light of space, time and context. The plea of 'maintenance or restoration of order' is not applicable to the general/normal circumstances like the present one. It is applicable to special circumstances e.g. mutiny or separatist movement. The joint force was not deployed in such a situation. Even the government never claimed so.

(b) From the very inception of the joint drive the government explained that it was working under the existing law just to aid the regular law-enforcing agency.

(c) When hue and cry arose due to the death in custody the government unequivocally asserted that any wrong done by the joint force would be investigated and tried according to the existing law.

(d) If the government had any plan to be under the umbrella of Article 46 of the constitution to indemnify the

This is in reference to the letter posted by Mr. Hasanat Alamgir about privatising DU. The very thought of the subject is appalling. I mean no offence to Mr. Alamgir, but I don't think that privatisation could be an answer to our problems.

Firstly, private universities are expensive. Not everybody in Bangladesh is rich enough to spend so much money on putting people through a private university. Furthermore, I think that where there is a will, there is a way. I study in IBA, and it is very much a part of DU. But we do not have any politics, and we do not have any session jams. Even when we are forcefully closed because of problems in the University, we make up for our lost time, with extra work.

Therefore, the answer to our problems may not be in privatisation, but rather in strict discipline for the students. Every year IBA produces the top business graduates and post-graduates in Bangladesh. I think DU can very well do the same.

Ayesha Tariq IBA, Dhaka University

I think Mr. Hasanat Alamgir's proposal (February 2) to privatise the Dhaka University is quite rational. The University is located in the best area of Dhaka, owns many magnificent buildings and acres of valuable land but most of its departments' output is zero and has become a burden for the nation. In spite of doing research most of its teachers are engaged in petty politics! For a long time the University area has been turned into a notorious criminal zone and a centre of political 'conspiracies'.

One US educated economist who has done an excellent research on economic aspects of Dhaka University, says that the education cost of every student is about 3-4 lacs taka, which, at the end of the day, the poor nation has to pay! Do the students and the teachers realise this fact?

Now free higher education is no more accepted. Higher education should be costly and for meritorious students. Even the British government, the pioneer of public service concept, is going towards implementing higher tuition fees on all university students at any cost. Under the proposed arrangement students would be allowed to get loans from banks and would be required to pay back after getting job. This system could also be tried in Bangladesh. If Dhaka University remains as it is I think one day it would face the same fate of Adamjee Jute Mill.

Manzur Elahi University of Sheffield, UK

Strange coincidence

Almost to an orchestrated cue with George Bush's State of the Union, Tony Blair started to sing Iraq's connection to Al-Qaeda. The world community is supposed to swallow without question what these two honourable gentlemen wish to have it believe, and do so with gratitude for being given such privileged information. How condescending! Some of us have heard this song before, for we recall the very able US Defence Secretary had been for the past two months in the habit of harping the same tune of Al-Qaeda connection. He however enlightened his audience with clear evidence of that link or where and how that connection was.

The 108 UN inspectors have done numerous inspections across Iraq but have so far found no hard evidence. These inspectors are the eyes and ears of the UN mandated inspection regime. Even Mr. Blix's report on 27 January failed to cite

Bangladesh cricket

This is in response to Alpana Alim's letter regarding Bangladesh cricket (February 5).

I myself quite agree with her what she said about cricket in our country.

We just cannot put an excuse whenever we lose a match. This has become the habit of the players and the cricket board officials. It is sad that we lost the match against Namibia. Whatever it is, I think, it is too early for us to get the Test status. We are not at all in a position to play Test matches.

I wonder what would be our team's performance in the upcoming World Cup. May God bless them!

Minhaj Ahmed Uttara, Dhaka

It is my response to the letter of Ms. Alpana Alim. I do understand that when our team plays a match let that be against Namibia or Pakistan the citizens of our country await eagerly to see them perform better overtime. Unfortunately that is not the case every time. But we cannot put too much expectation on the boys of the Bangladesh Cricket X1. I have a sugges-



game. We should not think of any team that as a minnow as in cricket you never know what is next. If we all keep on pointing out the negative points then I am afraid the boys will lose confidence which is a crucial need in the field. I think a little pat on the back will make the situation much easier for the team as the World Cup is not a baby's doll play.

In the World Cup we have seen teams like India, Pakistan etc who are mammoths in the game whereas Bangladesh is just a novice. As for the Test status everyone in the world does not get that status. We should be proud that we have reached such a milestone. We should be a bit more patient and remember that Rome was not built in a day.

Khalid Rahman Dhaka

I am concerned at the discouragement meted out by some of your correspondents to the boys of the Bangladesh Cricket X1. I have a sugges-

tion to make of a possible means of encouragement.

Maybe what the young men of our cricket team need to stimulate them is the founding of a Bangladesh Women's Cricket Team. When I was at my girls' public school in the UK, in the 1950s, we played cricket every summer term and took it very seriously. In

occasionally share with the lads playing cricket on the field in Lalmatia that I cross every day, walking between my flat and my school. Occasionally, when I demonstrate the difference between bowling and 'throwing', they invite me to join them, but I decline. At my age, I might strain something. The fear that a women's



Good luck for the World Cup

fact, the only person I have ever seen flatten three middle stumps in 3 balls was a 16 year-old friend of mine who was destined to become a PE teacher. I became Vice-Captain of my House, a fact I

thaid might defeat them may be just the 'encouragement' that our Test side needs to help them to improve their standards.

Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs) The British School in Dhaka

"My country right or wrong"

Megasthenes' column 'My country right or wrong' (January 25) is a date with history, not of long ago through. The old-timers were agog reminiscing the days when the famous phrase uttered by the then President Iskander Mirza of Pakistan, 'My country right or wrong' made waves in the patriotic hearts of his fellow citizens. To many it was a revelation that the phrase did not originate with Mirza.

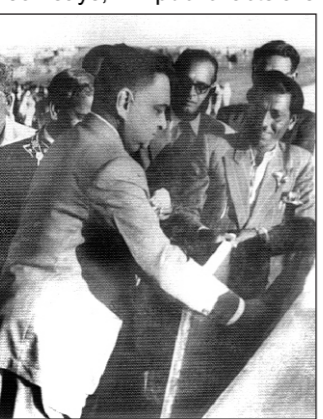


learn?
Riyadh Hossain, Austin, USA

Joint drive and law and order

Our attention has been drawn to the report 'Crimes creeping in' (January 21). People of the country have witnessed the improvement of law and order situation during the 'Operation Clean Heart'. A report published in September 2002, by the Bureau of Human Rights Bangladesh (BHRB), tells that in the previ-

politician. Interestingly, as Megasthenes' column has it, Mirza's innocuous compliment about sartorial elegance was the opening line to win the hands of Nahid Mirza, his second wife. His romantic overture for the second 'Kill' was, however, shot in flames before it could spell any disaster to her marital bliss. The portrayals of matters, however, private in nature, contribute to the understanding of history at its most liberal. The noted American thinker, Ralph Waldo Emerson says, "All public facts are



believes in democracy, rule of law, human rights and supremacy of peoples' will support such kind of law. Therefore, I vehemently oppose the ordinance and urge the government along with the leaders and policy makers of the 4-party alliance to ponder over the following points. a) Article 46 of our constitution does not authorise the government to make such an ordinance in the present context. The said article provides indemnity to 'any person in the service of the republic or

to be individualised, all private facts are to be generalised. Then at once History becomes fluid and true, and Biography deep and sublime". In his chameleonic talent, President Mirza also proved himself a 'superb actor' whenever movie camera was on to film his public engagements, so vouched the film buffs of the time.

The accompanying photograph shows: Major-General Iskander Mirza, governor-general of Pakistan laying the foundation stone of the Karachi Municipal Corporation's Clifton Beach Development scheme on June 21, 1956. Begum Iskander Mirza (Left) and Mr. A T Naqvi, Chief Commissioner of Karachi (2nd from left) look on.

Meagasthenes deserves gratitude for his excellent piece resonating with the history.

Syed Badrul Hoque Lalmatia, Dhaka

joint force, they should have made a declaration in this respect that the situation was beyond its control and they were to take extra-ordinary action to 'maintain or restore order'. But the government did not do so. On the contrary, they pledged to do justice in respect of any violation of law by the joint force. So the government has neither legal nor moral basis to promulgate such an ordinance.

Rezaul Karim Mohammadpur, Dhaka Privatising DU?

"Women's football"

In response to Munasir Kamal (February 03) can you please define an "Ultra-modern deviant" woman for me? I, being male, frequently flout "social norms". Does that make me deviant or is it reserved only for women?

Is expressing individual rights and freedom of expression (physical as well as verbal) an example of deviance?
Yahya, USA

I am responding to Mrs Angela Robinson's two points. One. The "turn-on" factor. This factor, I think, depends on the culture. Much more provocative dresses can be found at street corners at just about any streets in the West. In comparison, football costumes would be considered quite conservative. However, in a culture such as Bangladesh where leg showing is not considered a good thing yet, it can draw a lot of unwanted attention from a lot of unscrupulous men. To prove my point, may I very respectfully ask any grown-up women who would be willing to wear a short to wear and walk any street in Netrokona and have the feel for yourself! In Dhaka you may be OK. But in Netrokona? I am not so sure.

Two. "Men don't have to watch women playing". I have watched many TV talk shows in the USA. I remember in one talk show a few years ago, it was about porn actors and actresses facing the usual American TV viewers. Interestingly porn actors and actresses threw the same sentence in favour of their point of view. "If you don't like it, don't watch it" was their collective response. I personally happen to believe it's a flawed argument and also depends on where in the world we are talking. I am sure, you too, Mrs. Robinson, do not agree with the viewpoint of the porn makers. Football is not porn, however it is the argument that is so sarcastically similar.

We have a long way to go to get our women freed from the so-called cultural bondage.

Football playing, I think, is a wrong topic on this subject. Let us encourage ourselves to send our girls and daughters to school in large numbers. Let us empower our women with education. Let us not throw any more acid to them to disfigure them for the rest of their lives. Let us eliminate those thugs who throw acid at women.
Sakib Jamal Moraine, OH, USA

I write in response to all the letters the readers have sent regarding "Women's Football".

Well I'd like to draw out a few points before I start. Firstly we are a Muslim nation, and being a Muslim we should be aware of the fact that our religion allows women folk, like men, to pursue own earnings, engage in day today activities and women are in no way deprived from the creations and bounties of God. Now if that implies going to universities, or working in an office or teaching or even playing sports, they are entitled as Muslims to do so, whether our "religious leaders and preachers" like it or not. The reason why it is not a norm to play soccer, or for womenfolk to go out with normal shirts or pants is because of us, the male gender. We are reminded by God to "avert our glances". And that is something men don't do. On the other hand womenfolk are told to "dress in modesty". Now I think every reader will be aware that a "burkha" or even a "saree" can be worn in an immodest manner, whereas shirts and trousers can also be worn modestly.

The people who "sat" as a protest to cancel the match in my opinion can be categorized as fundamentalist. As they were more concerned on what the footballers were wearing rather than on the game itself.

Often in "*Khutbas*" I get to hear that 12-yr-old girls should not be allowed to go without covering their head etc. But never do I hear the 'Imam' saying, that outside there are so many beggars lined up, give charity with your hearts content, feed a poor person everyday, try to compete with each other in goodness etc.

Thus in spite of being Muslims, we are so not Muslims, as we hardly do what we are told to do in our religion.
Kashif Mahmood, Toronto, Canada

Personally I believe most socially conscious women, being aware of the state of society we currently live in, would probably refrain from playing football in public. That having been said, those who do wish to play soccer, or any other sport for that matter, should unquestionably be allowed to do so. In the article that was published on January 23, it was apparent that the women were not cancelling their game out of their personal sensibilities, but out of fear of religious fundamentalist groups that had been protesting the game.

If the reason for which some of us detest the notion of giving



Furore over female football

women equality in regards to sports is religion, let fundamentalists know that in the Qur'an, preceding instructions regarding the dress code and model moral conduct of women, there are verses instructing the *men* to "lower their gaze and guard their modesty. God is well acquainted with all that they do."

If women seek to play sports in any arena for the purpose of maintaining physical fitness or simply for enjoyment, it should not be them suffering because of the moral bankruptcy of certain men. It is the men who attend these games and cause trouble that should be dealt with sternly.

The issue of this particular soccer tournament is merely an

example of a much bigger problem. Too often traditions and even religion are being used as covers for subjugation and social exploitation. I, and probably many of the other readers commenting in this column sense that the protest against women expressing their freedoms is not so much out of love for religion or culture, but out of fear that the old notions of male dominance in society may be threatened. This incident reminds us that we have far to go in recognising the rights of our people, especially our women; and even further to go in implementing those ideals.
Omar Siddique State University of New York, USA

Rev. Mrs. Angela Robinson has nailed the problem of our society right on the head, in her letter in Women's Football. In our society, we have failed to teach our males, the modest behaviour towards women in general. Instead of rectifying male's inappropriate behaviour in public or private, we have put the onus on women by either covering them or limiting their access in the open. The reason women in our society are confined, be it in sports, social functions, is due to the fear of inappropriate behaviour from the ogling men. If we understand Islam, we are supposed to control our gaze as well as our mind towards women. If we cannot do that while women is in sports or normal activity, we are defying the teachings of our religion.

In response to Mr. Alam's claim, that foreigners opt for lower salary and that is the reason they get jobs in USA, is a true insult to the talents of our country. Any foreigner who gets a job in a US company goes through a process where his temporary work permit is processed towards permanent (Green Card). The application goes to State employment exchange where the company has to show the prevailing wages for that particular job skill. So, they just cannot arbitrarily set the salary. I am sure there are exceptions to those. The human resources group in all the reputable companies is there to monitor such activities.

There are thousands of Bangladeshi who come to study in USA and join the workforce after that. From my experience, they are very qualified, on the least to compete with the local workers not on the basis of lower salary but on the basis of their competence.
M. Hassan Plano, TX, USA