

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.



Don't call him 'Bangla Bhai'

I know it might be a little late to make the request, but I am tired of hearing you calling him 'Bangla Bhai' who is one of the most wanted terrorists in our country...

Even the Honourable Prime Minister calls him 'Bangla Bhai'. But now is better than never. From now on, please call him by his name. Sohail Hasan, Sydney

We people like to think big, attempt big; but when it comes to removing the wrong there is no one to stand straight and face the devil.

Look at our country, Bangladesh. The morning dew, its lush green grasses, the bluish-white skies, the colorful display of the nature, and the beautifully laid suburb, villages, and countryside. It makes one praise each moment, making us proud bit by bit being the citizens of this country.

But Bangladesh is looked down upon. It is once more in the news all around the globe. This time, not because of poverty, not even for flooding, but for "terrorism" and suicide bombing.

The birth of BANGLA BHAI has awakened a fear among the people that is amazingly deadly. It is the innocent people that become victims. Humanity has left our souls. The politicians and government are doing nothing but promising its citizens a secure life in the future. But things are getting worse each day. The poor are being deprived of food, shelter, and education. Yet, there are the on going telecasting of bombings and endless articles of threats in the newspapers.

It's time the government took immediate action to check the rot. Or is it time for the public, the common masses to take a stand? Terrorism is knocking at our doors, waiting to gulp us down. And before we open it we have to think something fast. We cannot let these cruel terrorists slaughter us so ruthlessly. Salman Habib, Chittagong



Political bluffing

Both AL and BNP are bluffing the millions of voters. AL's PR (public relations) philosophy is a mystery to the students of PR; and BNP is banking on opportunism. One is suffering from abhiman; while the other is keen to capitalise on the current transient religious moods of the new millennium.

When corruption is ruling the society and the public and private services, it is a farce to take the religious uniformed chaps seriously as if long kurta and tupi would ensure a reservation in jannat. Real ibadaat is internal, and not for display with totems and taboos. Why I have to know the religion of the person I am talking to? Judge him by his behaviour. Recently, I was debating in a shop in the

bazaar with a bearded owner; and at one stage he asked me bluntly whether I was a non-Muslim. I retorted at his bhagaban; as all names of the supreme creator merge into one, regardless of the limitations of the human languages. A mother calls her baby by a dozen nick names. I am puzzled by the current usage of Allah Hafiz, ditching Khuda Hafiz. What is the bit difference? Why a Muslim has to be Arabic oriented in his social life, in a country or society where the mother tongue is not Arabic? Rituals are for practice; for later involuntary actions, (such as breathing).

In the LDCs there is a weakness for charisma (lack of competition?). It is a type of

puja (associated with mantra). There are practical limits to hero-worshipping. This is fast changing age in this global village; hence propaganda and publicity techniques should keep pace with the changing variables.

Leaving aside politics, what social services has the AL rendered during the long exile in the opposition? I can't make a list. It is not being realised by the political leaders that opposition has a vital role to play in a political system. The positive actions in the opposition are missing and what we see is negative politics with useless hartals and misuse of the microphones and loudspeakers. The public judgment would be on current actions, not the glories of the past.

The BNP regime is lenient with internal discipline, leading to corrupt practices, due to lack of deterrent punishment, nepotism, and miscarriage of justice. The virus has spread in the vile environment, affecting the civil and public services. The systems losses in tenders and contracts are colossal, and some of it is being diverted for funding the coming general elections.

Power lies in not using it. There is no free service in the country.

Political inflation is high. Politics is facing a crisis, and the political netas have no solution in sight. The illegal use of arms has proliferated, and it is going to take its toll. Alif Zabr, Dhaka

Masjide-Taqwah

Masjide-Taqwah, situated on the outskirts of Dhanmondi Lake, is a beautiful mosque, built artistically. But it is disheartening to note that a portion of the footpath around the north-west of the mosque is in a dilapidated condition, because the bricks laid down on this portion of the footpath were apparently neither plastered with cement nor given finishing touches. As a result, the devotees of the northern and western Dhanmondi are facing tremendous difficulty in entering the mosque through its north-western gate.

Consequently, I would request the Dhaka City Corporation or the authorities concerned to look into this matter immediately and take prompt action for plastering the dilapidated portion of the footpath around the north-west of the mosque with cement and giving finishing touches to it without delay, for action delayed is action denied. Kalimur Rahman Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Tipaimukh Dam

Thank you for publishing Mr. Altaf Ahmed Choudhury's letter of January 16 captioned "Tipaimukh Dam". Mr. Altaf braved to pen the miseries of the proposed Tipaimukh Dam will pose for Bangladesh.

The issue refers to some bilateral discussions of 1972 that validates Tipaimukh Dam. Damn! Why can't India give us back all the enclaves e.g. Berubari, Tin-Bigha, Padua etc in the same spirit of a 1972 bilateral agreement?

Mr. Altaf Ahmed Choudhury's letter is also laudable because his attempt might break our intelligentsia's inertia to write more newspaper articles on this topic. It might also awaken the country's policy makers to negotiate better deals when bilateral issues are tabled. For example, since Bangladesh does not have many choices of products for exporting it might press conditions to Indian exporters to employ Bangladeshis in their organisations as a prerequisite for export-

ing to Bangladesh. This might partially offset the existing trade deficit.

I earnestly request The Daily Star to invite and publish more letters and articles on this issue as it concerns a national interest. Badal Muhammad First Lane, Kalabagan, Dhaka

Paternity leave

For giving financial support to family many housewives are working. These working women, particularly during pregnancy, and after child birth have to go through trauma as the following conditions create difficulty for them in having to divide their time and position between working and bringing up child. In such cases, a husband can render practical help to his wife. But, practically, it sometimes becomes impossible for a man to stretch out a helping hand as he also works outside to raise a family. In many countries, after childbirth, men are given paternity leave up to 6 months to support and look after the child and help his wife to perform other works.

Following that, in Bangladesh also the authorities concerned should make a resolution on paternity leave and implement it. Rubab Abdullah Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Discrimination against minorities

The religious minorities in Bangladesh are the most silent minorities in the

Indian subcontinent. They are not united to the extent Muslims are in India, neither they have an elite clique like the Christians and Sindh Hindus in Pakistan. Religious minorities whether we would like to face it or not, are shelved in the lowest strata of our social hierarchy. Yet, they had remained in Bangladesh, bearing repression, persecution, communal violence, neglect, and worst of all institutional discrimination against them in their daily lives. Their numbers, though, are



READING newspaper

There is no denying that in this age of science and marvelous technological development, the newspaper, one of the best gifts of modern civilisation, plays a vital role in making the common people living in every nook and cranny of the country aware of what is going in and around the country. It has a great educative value. It will not be an exaggeration to say that when a newspaper carrying the news and views on current affairs of the world appears at our door, we begin to read it with curiosity. Those who are habitual readers of newspapers feel like a fish out of water if they fail to read it even for a single day.

It is the only media through which we ventilate all our grievances. It helps form public opinion. The modern civilised world cannot do without it. Quazi Md Mohboobul Haque Faroqui House, Comilla

in decline. Thus Bangladesh, as a country that proclaims to be the 'most tolerant' amongst the Muslim nations, is not merely a disgrace but an outright failure.

A mere constitutional proclamation saying all religions have the right to practice freely will never ever achieve anything for the long repressed minorities.

More needs to be done and I suggest the first step should be creating a statutory agency which will oversee the recruitment issues like discrimination against minorities in public and private sectors with wide ranging powers such as fining the agency which fails to maintain a minimum healthy balance, and which discriminates. They will have the

power to 'black list' organisations and force them to act appropriately.

I have nothing to ask from the ruling regime, which's dubious nationalism blended with right wing opportunism. So I urge the fourteen party alliance which claims to be 'the progressive' side, to include the concept of such an agenda into their manifesto. Mohibul Hassan London School Economics, London, UK

Satanic acts

A group destroyed the pride symbol of the superpower in a misguided act. A couple of them cooked up excuses to destroy an uninvolved country killing thousands of children, men, women and soldiers to no avail.

When we go to stone Satan's imaginary replica, does it become furious and kill further in revenge? But I am sure Allah is with us and Satan will be defeated in the end in all its forms. MAH, On e-mail

Insurgency

There are insurgencies all over the world and Bangladesh is no exception. The political parties are blaming each other for insurgency. But officially or unofficially neither party is accepting the responsibility nor trying to find out the root causes of the insurgency. Currently, some politicians are identifying the teaching staff and students of madrassahs as responsible for insurgency. We all know that during recent bombings in England Prime Minister Tony Blair mentioned during his official interview with CNN that important causes of insurgency in the world are poverty, unem-

Civilised brutes?

We, humans, have made tremendous progress in the field of science & life is more sophisticated than it once was. We should be proud & celebrate the fact that we are more civilised and superior to other living beings. But how civilised we actually are & what are the parameters of civilisation? We study Maths, Literature, Astronomy, Aesthetics, Philosophy, and Religion. How do they make us different from beasts? Is there any subject to teach us morality, good sense, empathy & tolerance? Religious teachings seem to focus more on the outward performance of rituals rather than the inner truth. We find extremism, fanaticism in the current practices of religions, be it Islam, Christianity or Hinduism.

Are we heading for a future where our progeny would be technologically advanced & highly civilised brutes? Is there anything we can do about it? Tito Kallyanpur, Dhaka

Why this discrimination?

Why a nun can be covered from head to toe and she's respected for devoting herself to God, but when a Muslim woman does that, she's considered 'oppressed'?

Why a Jew can grow a beard and he's just practicing his faith, and when a Muslim does that, he's an extremist?

When a western woman stays at home to look after the house and kids she's sacrificing herself and doing good for the household, but when a Muslim woman does so, she 'needs to be liberated'?

Why is it that when a child dedicates himself to a subject, he has potential, and when a child dedicates himself to Islam, he is hopeless?

When a Christian kills someone, religion is not mentioned, (i.e., Ireland and the IRA) but when a Muslim is charged with a crime, it's Islam that goes to trial? But then again, why is it after all that, Islam is still the fastest growing religion in the world? Taher, J. Sharjah - U.A.E

No newspaper!

The newspaper arrived after three days of no newspapers with an announcement on the inconvenience to its readers for not publishing pages like Star Literature, Star Tech and Law &

Our Rights.

I am an addictive reader of your newspaper and I know that I am not the only one.

The inconvenience which was caused by not publishing these pages was immense. Please realise that for three days the readers without any newspaper were audience to discussion and comparison on the techniques and know-how of buying and slaughtering farm animals, their price and the market condition.

The cattle market is getting more organised than before as there was a separate enclosure for quality animals like those valued over Tk. 100,000. Wow! Yet another feather to enhance the male status-cap, how chauvinistic!

When these animals are slaughtered beneath the open sky, fresh blood flow all over making blood-pools and in the mean time the fallen animals are cut-up in whatever way, while the skin and the entrails of the animal are set aside for the scavengers to do what "he" or "it" would like done.

Aside the mandatory sacrifice of the animal there was another form of sacrifice, the human

sacrifices during the 11, 12, and 13 January on account of natural and man-made calamity.

Severe cold weather was prevailing throughout the country. We were too busy to take cognizance of the meteorological forecast. There was no preparation for protection from this natural calamity. The poorer section of the population was severely affected. Their suffering and inconvenience was acute when they were struck by cold, cough, or fever or even pneumonia. They could not avail of any medical services. Nearly all the clinics and hospitals on which these people depend on malfunctioned due to 3 days of Eid holidays. So human lives as many as 21 if not more were sacrificed to cold waves, which is our regular visitor during the Bangla month of Magh.

This is not the end of the story. As thick fog accompanied cold waves we did not choose not to drive through fog rather our choice was to drive and drive recklessly in faulty vehicles. There was no one to check or prevent us from doing this. So another 25 and 57 human lives were sacrificed to fog and funny road rules! The injured were rushed to hospitals without medical attendance.

There is some more to this account on sacrifices. Away from Bangladesh as many as 13 or more people sacrificed their lives due to the collapse of the building in which they had only begun to start living. There was no fitness certification by building inspector, so the boarders were fooled from which situation there was no turning back.

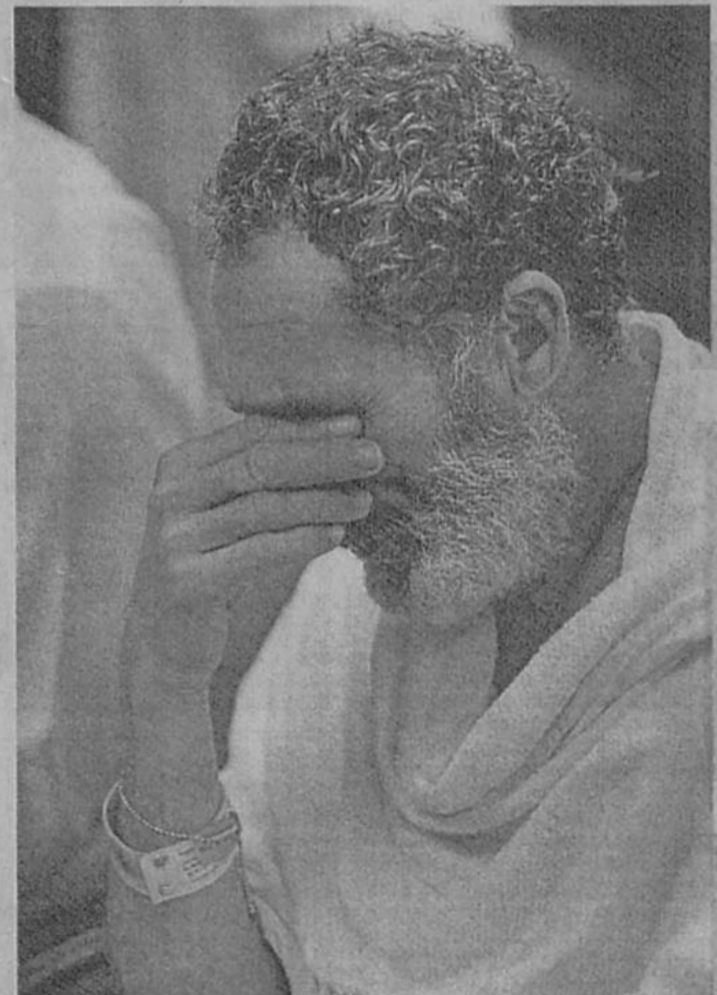
So after the three no-newspaper days, any reader would be severely affected by the omission of those three pages, particularly the literature page in my case.

Farida Shaikh Enayet On e-mail

"Pure food"

The "Star City" issue of 16-Jan runs an alarming head-line: "Mobile court drive set to end" - so, is this supposed to mean that our need for pure food is over? The drives against adulterated and sub-standard food-items should simply be a continuous and never-ending process. Formulation of the Pure Food Act, 2005 cannot be an end in itself.

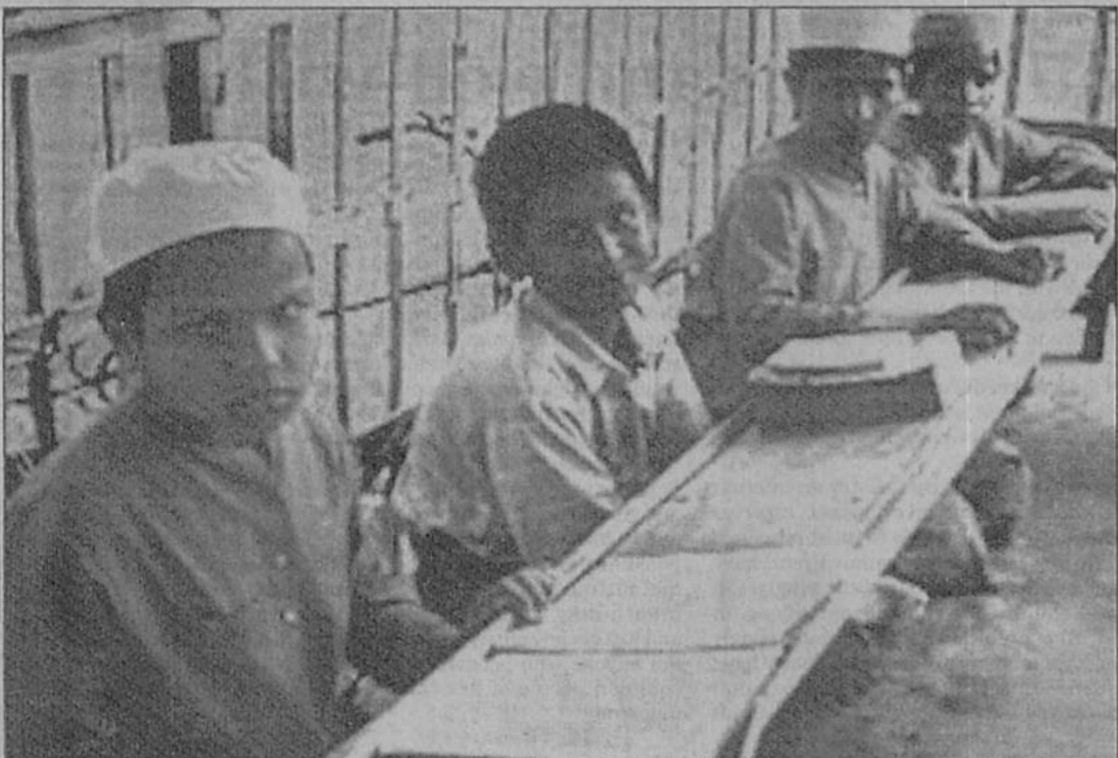
The law has to be strictly enforced on a day-to-day basis. Otherwise, it will meet the same fate of so many other laws of this country which got obliterated due to lack of practice. Special directorates/cells with adequate magistracy power should be formed to look into these matters on a permanent basis. CNR, Chittagong



Steps to prevent the stampede

We are shocked and feeling very sad by the news of the pilgrims being killed in building collapse and stampede in Mecca. A large number of people had died and were injured in Mina stampede, our deep sympathy to the affected families.

We do not understand why the stampede could not be prevented, almost every year people are dying in such incidents. The Saudi government must take adequate measures so that this sort of happenings never occur again. There must be some way to prevent it; law-enforcing agencies should remain vigilant all the time. The pilgrims must not be allowed to take their luggage with them when they go to perform the stone throwing ritual. It just cannot go on like this. Nur Jahan, Chittagong



Necessity of religious education

Bangladesh, our beloved country, is facing the militancy problem. The JMB suicide bombers have been brainwashed and made to understand that launching such attacks is part of their religious duty. Something has to be done to stop such activities. And only proper religious education can help us in this respect. MAH Nazim Dept. of Political science, DU