

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.

PM sees more 'conspiracies'

A recent DS article reported "apprehending further political plots during the remaining period of her government by a certain party, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said her government along with the people will foil all conspiracies to maintain the tempo of development."

The article reported "they (indicating her political opponents) will hatch conspiracy during the remaining months of the tenure of the coalition government." and that the prime minister alleged that "they" had wanted to destroy the education system in a planned way so that aliens could capture all important jobs keeping the country's people subservient. She urged people to remain alert about the party.

After all these years of democracy, isn't it about time that when the prime minister, the leader of the main opposition party, and leaders of this nation and of the political parties come out and name who they mean. We

all know who they mean (the BNP means the Awami League and the Awami League means the BNP when they say "they"), but if you're going to accuse or blame someone, why pretend to hide behind political niceties. As they say, if you're going to blame or accuse, name names.

M. M. Haque New York

Far from Bangladesh

This has reference to the letter written by Dr. Enamul Kader published in your daily on 6th Feb'06 titled as above. One cannot but share his lament for the decline in the state of Bangla music since the golden days of the sixties and the seventies. In fact, the decline is all pervasive, both in the field of tuning and lyrical compositions of the songs and that is why these days the singers of the modern songs like to entertain the audiences in the musical functions with the songs titled as "Harano Diner Gaan" and "Fele asha diner Gaan" and etc. Even in West Bengal singers like Sreeekant, Indraneel and others engage themselves in the rendition of old songs sung by the musical talents like Hemanta, Dhananjoy, Shyamal Mitra, Satinath, Manabendra and Tarun.

As for the comments of Dr. Kader on Kalpana, I would like to state that the fault lies in the selection of songs by Kalpana. There are few old songs which when rendered by modern artistes will never bring about the same effect on the listeners even if the rendition is accompanied by "smooth orchestration and good recording quality." I cannot check the temptation of quoting the song "Naa Jeona" by Lata. Its rendition by any modern artiste,

be it Shakila Zafar of Bangladesh or Anuradha Purool of Bombay fails to convince the listeners with the plaintive appeal of the original. Sabina's "Eki Sonar Aloy" adjudged as the best modern song ever sung by any artiste of this country falls into the same class of Lata's "Naa Jeona." and Kalpana has shown lack of wisdom in selecting the song for its inclusion in her album. Her singing of the song in her mellifluous voice is absolutely correct but hardly escapes the straining after effects in her rendition.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has made some real progress in the field of devotional songs.

Dr. Kader will agree that very few devotional songs other than those sung by Pannalal Bhattacharya, gained popularity in the sixties and seventies. I have in my possession a CD of devotional songs sung by one Shammil Rabbani and I would like to share the pleasure of listening to these wonderful songs of Djendralal, Rajanikant and Atulprashad with Dr.Kader. I do therefore wonder if it could be possible for Dr.Kader to give me his e-mail address so that I can transfer those songs to a connoisseur like him.

S. R. Shaheed Banani DOHS, Dhaka

Killing of teacher

We are shocked at the news that a RU teacher was killed on the campus of the university, reportedly falling prey to internal feud. Dhaka University Teachers Association staged a sit in protest and demanded punishment to the killers.

We also echo the teachers' sentiments. A Reader On e-mail

Cartoon controversy

In the West it is perceived like 'what is wrong with it, it is merely a cartoon'. Martin Luther King said, "Rioters are those whose voices are unheard."

Understanding a culture and showing respect to it is civility. We do need to protest, to save our culture and belief. How can we do that?

Europe has come together. An EU official has made it clear "Anything against Denmark is against Europe."

We should rise up to the occasion and protest intelligently, effectively making the impression that we are for accommodation and peaceful coexistence in the global society of humans. Islam has contributed immensely to human civilisation and culture.

M M Haque Jeddah, K.S.A



PHOTO: AFP

opinion in the Ed-Column of the Washington Post. She says, "Denmark is a faraway country of which Americans know little and violence are in places where there are no Americans and that best explains the muted American reactions." She further states that dozens of American papers have stated that they won't reprint the cartoons because they prefer to refrain from gratuitous assaults on religious symbols. In 1989 THE POST published "Piss-Christ", a Photograph of Christ on a crucifix submerged in a jar of urine. That picture, a work of art, received a grant from National Endowments for Arts but led to Congressional denunciations, protests and letter writing campaigns. Anne further states that when Newsweek published allegations of the misuse of Quran at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base resulting in rioting and violence; Newsweek

distasteful, offensive etc is certainly true, but I cannot see it to be the realm of government to be involved in what can or cannot be published - how many blasphemous and indeed offensive images of Christ have been produced over the decades? Most European papers have now decided to publish the caricature, which in my mind is a important symbolic gesture of solidarity and of affirmation that freedom of speech and information is just that."

For my part, I am in agreement with you insofar as I do not see it to be the role of government to regulate freedom of expression. However, it seems a bit hypocritical that while (Danish) government curtails our freedom of expression when it suits it to "maintain cultural integrity - i.e. having European sounding names, Christian names etc for Children" yet when it comes to protecting the sanctity of personal beliefs (in this case it just so happens to be religious), it is turning a deaf ear.

"In my honest opinion, freedom of anything entails taking on responsibility to execute the rights that are given by that very freedom. Offending someone for absolutely no benefit whatsoever just to demonstrate a point is being a rebel without a cause... which is immature and deserves a slap in the face rather than defense as you have chosen.

"I took the same view when a Bangladeshi writer (Taslima Nasrin) claimed that the Holy Quran needs to be revised and the west treated her like a goddess. I know what I believe and I believe these strongly. Certain parts of our lives need to be treated with sanctity - be that our love, our passion... in this case... it's someone's religion."

"In the end, you and I will agree to disagree. The cultural bridges that we built some 15 years ago through personal friendship transcends these silly misdemeanors by a bunch of zealots without a cause (who are behaving the same way as the religious zealots they talk about)." And he replied, "On the little issue where we are disagreed, well of course there is hypocrisy - especially in these sanctimonious Scandinavian places - where they pretend they have found the perfect way of life - so perfect it leads to high suicides rate, alcoholism and drugs - great. Unfortunately, these issues are recuperated by politically motivated activists that have an agenda to make true the so called clash of civilisation. So best not to play their game."

I think it is insensitive and distasteful to offend a religious icon.

Religion to some is a very passionate and private topic - akin perhaps to those who we love and care deeply about. Poking fun at such a personal level will cause hurt and resentment. It is equally wrong to burn down embassies.

Last night spoke at length with a close Danish friend - whose loud and insatiable laughter would make anyone believe there was not an iota of unhappiness in this world - about the fiasco. He was apologetic and seemed to be of the opinion that had the Danish government taken heed of the call by the governments of certain Arab and Muslim countries months ago to engage in dialogue, this mess could have been prevented. As for the offending newspaper, he said their only goal was to make money under the guise of freedom of expression.

There needs to be calm. There needs to be reflection. We, as Muslims who are being demonized by certain western zealots, should not bite the dog that bites us. That's what separates us from that species. Do we stay clear of a mad dog? Yes we do.

Shabbir A. Bashir, PhD Vancouver, Washington, USA

was blamed saying "Newsweek lied and people died".

I am in full agreement with Anne when she says "Gradually the Islamic world is learning that we don't respect religion in the same manner as they (Muslims) do. Slowly we are learning that they (Muslims) feel differently about the printed word and the printed picture from us. And somehow, I've got the feeling that this new knowledge will be not the beginning of understanding but the inspiration for more violence."

The entire episode of the Danish Cartoon Controversy reminds me of the statement of Albert Einstein who rightly said, "Politics is more difficult than Physics and the world is more likely to die from bad politics than from bad physics."

Badrul Islam Uttara, Dhaka

The world has been hijacked by a little storm in a tea cup that brewed in the Kingdom of Denmark some months ago. A cartoon depicting the holy prophet of Islam, Muhammad (pbuh) was published by a newspaper offending millions of Muslims around the globe.

Some of my friends - of various backgrounds, religion and culture, scattered around the world and engaged in diverse professions ranging from software, banking to politics - and I have been discussing this issue. I am sending in excerpts from our exchanges for the benefit of your readers.

It started with a note from me: "For a country like Denmark which has an officially 'approved' list to decide which names infants can and cannot be given, it is outrageous to hide behind the notion of freedom of expression to offend and alienate the vast majority of the Muslims in such a disrespectful and insensitive manner by printing cartoons of the Holy Prophet. Shame on you and shame on everyone else who has jumped on this bandwagon."

Someone wrote back: "I am afraid that I cannot agree with you - that the caricature is



PHOTO: AFP

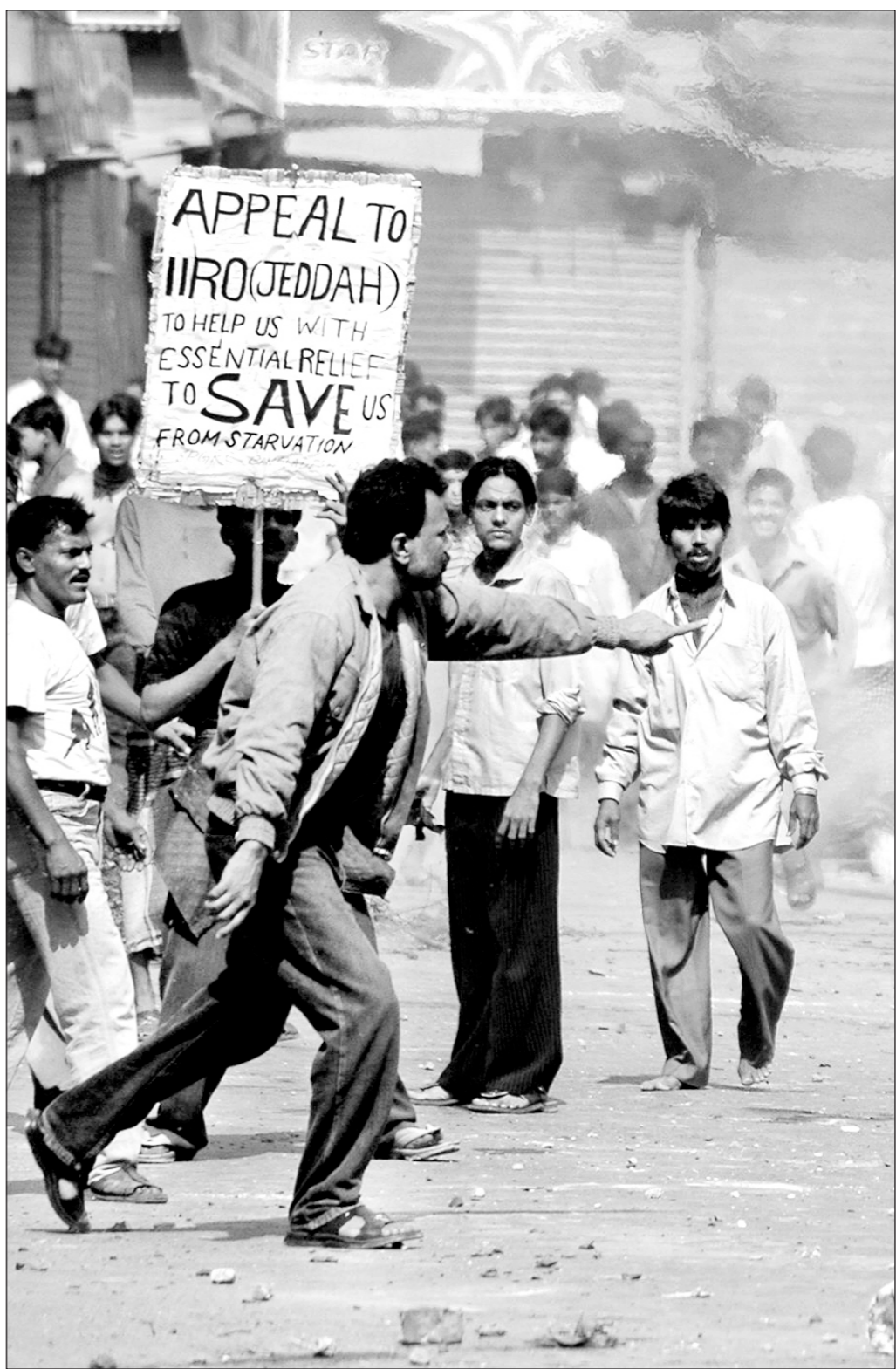


PHOTO: AFP

Stranded Pakistanis

I want to focus on the news item titled "Stranded Pakistanis Clash with Cops" published in The Daily Star on 3rd February 2006.

For more than three decades, a large number of Pakistanis (about 3 lakh) have been living in this country, although we are squeezing day-by-day with our huge population in a small delta known as the world's most densely populated country. From the inception of the country, number parties, military rulers, etc. have run it but nothing has been done on this issue. My question is --who is responsible for this situation? Who can reply and at present to whom we can put the question? Is it our foreign policy? May I request the present government to handle the issue properly?

On 2 February 2006, there were 100 including 25 policemen injured in a clash between Stranded Pakistanis (SPs) and police. Who can tell us that there will be no death in such unpredictable clashes in near future?

Is it not inhuman not to allow any human being to talk about their rights?

Mohd. Masud Rana Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Offices, schools in residential areas

Residential areas are losing their basic character these days. Some people are invading the serenity and solemnity of the nesting ambience by installing their offices in residential areas. More appalling is the fact that those people are setting up schools in the areas for making money. The trouble that these institutions pose is manifold in nature. The roads in the areas become so busy that people find it difficult to move freely. Children are the worst victims of this phenomenon. It is observed that some loaded vehicles ply around the residential areas. As a result, accidents often take place.

One wonders if there is no specific law for the residential areas. If laws are there the question arises as to how and why they are violated.

Let people live in a congenial atmosphere. Rafiqul Islam Rime Agrabad, Chittagong

Tipaimukh dam hazard

The article of Mr. M. A. Matin on Tipaimukh Dam that appeared on 7 February '06 tried to dispel the concerns raised by the people of Bangladesh. The basis of his contention is based on a comparison of Tipaimukh with Kaptai Dam. There are differences in facts about the two dams which Mr. Matin did not point out. The run down of the river Karnaphuli from Kaptai point is about 40km mostly through hilly regions before the river merges with the Bay of Bengal at Chittagong city shore. On the other hand, the river Barak flows initially through the small areas of hills and then it runs into plains. Thereafter its tributaries Surma, Kushiara and finally Meghna / Padma merge and flow into the Bay of Bengal along the plain lands of hun-

dreds of kilometers as against about 40km only of mostly hilly lands in case of Karnaphuli. The hoars of Sylhet starting from near about the point of bifurcation of Barak into Surma and Kushiara running initially through Zakiganj Upajilla of Sylhet used to provide enough water into the hoars during the rainy season till 1947. But due to regular withdrawal of water upstream in Assam by India thereafter the Surma and Kushiara rivers silted up heavily due to restricted flow of water coming down from the upper level in Assam during monsoon and off-monsoon periods. Your photographer may visit the Surma river at the adjacent position of the river just north of old Kaliganj Bazar to know how badly the river has silted up.

Altat Ahmed Choudhury Zakiganj

Regulation of CNG rickshaws

Availability of transportation has always been a problem in Bangladesh. Buses are not always a suitable mode of transport for many of us. As a result a significant number of people are dependent on the CNG-run autorickshaws.

The introduction of meters in these autorickshaws was welcomed by the people, since it saved time and energy. But, nowadays it is no longer serving its purpose. Most of the meters give erroneous readings. After much observation, I have found out that some techniques have been applied to these meters so that they show exaggerated readings. It is also not possible to argue with the drivers since there is no such way to prove our claim. To make matters worse, many drivers refuse to go with the meter or demand additional fare.

So, I think the government should form a regulatory body in order to check the accuracy of these meters and prevent

harassment of people. Kamrul Huda Talukdar East West University, Dhaka

Opportunities abroad

I am a Bangladeshi citizen visiting many African and Middle Eastern countries as part of my professional duties. I saw that in most of the places Indians are playing a vital role in the economy of those countries. For example, in Kampala more than 60 thousand Indian families are residing. Same with Nairobi and other African cities. Some of them even migrated 50 years ago. Most businesses are in their hands. Similar example can be cited from Middle Eastern cities like Doha, Dubai etc. I am serving in an organisation where Indians hold most of the key positions.

What are our diplomats doing abroad? They are rarely seen committed to their job. I can tell you still there is a lot of scope for us. Our overpopulated country can very well export its skilled and unskilled manpower to those countries. The government should look into the matter. Nurul Salam On e-mail

Long march

We witnessed blanket arrests & sufferings of thousands of the poorest of the poor non-political people during the long march.

Politics in short should be for establishing bright ideas and ensuring a good future for the people in all respects, but not at the cost of people. But the powers that be appear to be unaware of what we need as a nation. Md. Yousuf Hassan Gopibagh 1st Lane, Dhaka