

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.



Tigers get the better of the Lions

Through the columns of your paper I would like to congratulate the Bangladesh cricket team for winning the second one-dayer at Bogra against the Sri Lankans, a formidable opposition even without Chawinda Vas and Atapattu. The boys have proved that they can deliver if they are committed and focused in their task. And commitment and resolve were evident in their eyes from the time they emerged onto the pitch till the last run was notched up for victory. We hope that our players will build on their victory and not rest on their glory. We expect that winning will be the norm rather than the exception for the Bangladesh team. They should make winning a habit and take lessons from the losses.

Like all Bangladeshis I hope that those detractors who talk of relegating us from the top level of cricket will shut up, once and for all.

I wish the team many more successes in future.
S A Choudhry, On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP

Anti Corruption Commission (ACC)

We belong to a nation that has been able to create a world record by maintaining the first place in corruption for last four years. No nation has been able to beat us for several years running.

The government had formed an independent ACC, headed by a retired Justice more than a year ago, which is sitting idle, doing nothing in practice. The World Bank, the ADB and other donor agencies are pressing our government to activate the near-dead ACC, but to no avail.

The reason behind keeping the ACC inoperative is not far to seek. We have not forgotten that its Chairman had issued a notice to all secretaries and other concerned bureaucrats to inform the ACC within a month the whereabouts of the many unaccounted for vehicles of various projects after the local electronic and print media had published a very sensational news that a large number of very costly government vehicles were missing. We as law-abiding citizens of the country have nothing to do with those corrupt officials, but we should never forget those people for whom the country is being defamed. From the recent declaration of the Chairman of ACC, we hope to get some positive result to detect the unscrupulous gang of people who are ruining our future prospects and us. I would request the Hon'ble President and the Prime Minister to kindly look into the matter and take immediate steps to activate the ACC by reorganising it and removing anyone within it that is proving a stumbling block in its proper functioning.

Peerzada Syed Rofiqul Hussain
Hiala Shaheh Bari, Habigonj

Cost of a planetarium

Zabidur Rahman in his letter said that the "Bhasani Novo Theatre" cost Taka 133 crore, or about US\$19 million and asked how a simple planetarium could cost that much. He opined that 'even in the West, in places like the US, Canada and UK one could easily buy at least 2 or 3 planetariums including all the buildings with that amount. I would challenge someone to call up GOTO or other planetarium suppliers. They will find that the only the amount for the equipment on its own, for the very largest system, would be around \$5 million.

First, not being familiar with Bhasani Novo Theatre I don't know whether it's a simple or highly modern and complex planetarium. Yes, we can probably have a small planetarium for considerably less, but what am I getting? Am I getting modern and sophisticated equipment or am I getting more basic equipment. I have no idea what

type of facility Zabidur Rahman would like or what Bangladesh officials wanted in a planetarium. But I do know a new planetarium in the US state of Minnesota will seat 200 - that doesn't appear to be large considering how many people we have in our country who might take advantage of visiting the planetarium.

The Minnesota planetarium will have a 60-foot diameter and the Planetarium Theater will feature a fibre-optic star projector that will simulate a glorious day & night sky. The theater will also include a full-dome, 3-D video system that will engage audiences. The Minnesota North Star Observatory will connect visitors to remote telescopes and orbiting satellites portraying recent and live images!

How much will the planetarium cost? The project will cost approximately \$28.1 million in total, approximately \$13.7 million of which will be spent on construction, \$11.8 million on equipment and exhibits, and \$2.6 million on design.

And why will it cost \$28 million? Because it is being built on top of a library and the costs will be shared. If the planetarium were built as a stand-alone facility it would cost almost \$9 million MORE.

Maybe our planetarium isn't so expensive after all.

M M Haque
On e-mail

Biman in a mess

The malaise of Bangladesh Biman, the national flag carrier, is not a consequence of neglect of only days or months. Delayed flight schedules, artificial ticket crises, mismanagement and corruption have engulfed Biman for long time. The chaotic situation now prevailing in the flight schedules emanates from nothing less than the overall poor management, procurement and maintenance of planes. Reportedly, if a flight on an international route is grounded, it causes a loss of one crore taka. Add to this the repairing cost, cost for procure-

ment of spare parts, expenses for passengers due to flight cancellation. Reputation suffers ultimately, making no commercial sense. During the Four-party Alliance government, a minister had to lose his job due to chaotic management of the Hajj flights.

Unfortunately the incumbent minister has not been able to show his efficiency either. The mess now is even more intractable. Flight schedules have been severely disrupted causing troubles and sufferings to the passengers. Many people working in the Middle East risk losing their jobs. Many Bangladeshis living or studying abroad now choose other airlines for traveling to Bangladesh. The government must act urgently to remove Biman's malaises and devise ways to make it profitable.

Mallik Akram Hossain
The University of Hong Kong

British atrocity in Iraq

The world witnessed British atrocity on the Iraqi detainees recently, published in the Western media. From the pictures we get an impression of the atrocious acts of oppression meted out to the Iraqis in the name of interrogation. The British often claims to be the most civilized nation in the world. Mr. Blair, what do you have to say about the treatment of the detainees? After this, will you say that the British soldiers are working for democracy, establishment of human rights, press freedom etc in Iraq? Mr. Bush and Blair, how much blood you need to establish your democratic (!) projects in Iraq? How long will you oppress the peaceful people of the world?

What the British soldiers are doing in Iraq is totally anti-humanitarian, against the Geneva Convention and the ethics of war, although the Iraqis are not war criminals. I condemn the British brutality.

M A H Nazim, University of Dhaka

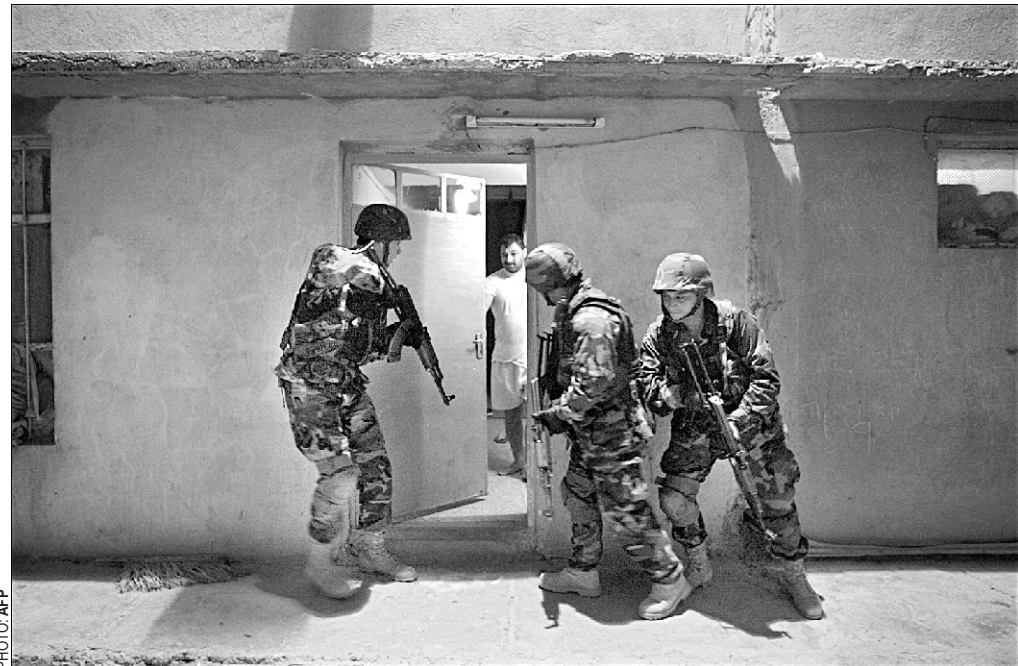


PHOTO: AFP

Bird Flu in the neighbourhood!



PHOTO: AFP

It was bound to happen. And now it really is a serious matter. Most of the eggs we import are from India. Besides, we have a lot of poultry farms from which we can get protein. At first, the concern was the entry of bird flu in this region i.e. specially in the Saarc countries, now that it has occurred in India our main concern should be to prevent the entry of this virus into our country. What steps can we take in this regard?

I think, being a least developed country, we don't have that kind of economic and institutional support like the developed countries. We don't have enough health facilities compared to Thailand or India. So, if somehow this flu enters Bangladesh it might assume an epidemic proportion.

Though a lot of people in the urban areas already have knowledge about this flu, most of the people of rural areas don't. Even, people in both the urban and rural areas don't know what to do and how to prevent this flu.

Therefore, the government should take necessary steps and make a policy to control the impending situation. Besides, the civil society, the NGOs, the media and other organisations in the rural and urban areas must take necessary steps to inform people about this matter.

Shuvo Bakar
On e-mail

Cartoon commotion

I agree with the logic of the boycott, but at the same time ask, doesn't Islam teach us to forgive and forget and let Allah deal with the sinners? It was our Prophet himself who taught us to be patient and calm, and believe in Allah's Judgment as opposed to performing outrageous acts and defaming Muslims. Irrational and fanatical behaviour will not help our future generations but will only add more hatred towards Muslims all around the world. As a Muslim living in a foreign country I have already been a victim of hateful comments. By acting out of emotions and boycotting Danish products we will only help reinforce the misperception that all Muslims are intolerant.

Emran Taher
On e-mail

We all know what that magazine in Denmark has published. It's making fun of our beloved Prophet by drawing pictures of him and describing him as a terrorist. Moreover it refused to apologise because it was considered a practice of freedom of speech and democracy. I ask you all to join hands with other Muslims and boycott Danish products.

Taher, J.
U.A.E.

I write this letter in reference to all the commotion that is going on about the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It seems that a lot of Muslims of Bangladesh and other nationalities are very angry with this. It appears that many people actually think that there is a massive Jewish conspiracy behind all this. This has actually gone so far that this conspiracy theory is actually being broadcast on prime time TV. I would also like to say that many people are calling this situation a blasphemy. This cannot be

blasphemy because the people who made and published the cartoons are not Muslims.

There are many readers that are actually asking that the editor of the Danish newspaper be punished as if he committed a criminal offence. This is in fact not slander as many readers are saying because the person it is commenting upon on is not alive. The attack on the Danish

embassy in Beirut is an appalling incident, one, which any sane minded Muslim, would admit. As the Danish authority said, the government does not control the media, something that cannot be said about Bangladesh.

Azfar Khan
On e-mail

Jyllands-Posten, a popular newspa-

per of Denmark, a country that has a sizeable Muslim population, mostly migrant from Turkey and Pakistan, never took such an initiative until now to depict the Prophet of Islam. Why now? Sweden, its neighbour, with the same social broadness and democratic values, has also a noticeable number of Muslim populations, where a recent census shows that about 40% of the

Swedish populations think that the Muslims should be restricted from entering their country. They never used to think about the Muslims this way before. Why now? The same is true for Norway, France, Germany, and New Zealand. For many years, the European newspapers and magazines never thought of publishing the Prophet's (peace be upon him) caricatures to prove their right to exercise 'freedom of expression'. Why now?

Islam is there for last 1400 years. Not until very recently, not until people started seeking democracy in different parts of the world including the Middle Eastern countries that are ruled by the kings and/or dictators, and more precisely, not until the 9/11 in the U.S., the West never faced problems with Islam or with the Muslims. Why now?

So, as long as the Israel-Palestine conflict is there, as long as Bin Laden or Al-Qaeda is there, and as long as many other radical Islamic groups are there worldwide to terrorise the West, the truth behind the present day Islam-West conflict will remain buried under the camouflage of 'Islamic bigotry', 'Islamic religious extremism', 'Islamic intolerance', and anything that is truly Islamic will never be revealed.

Who are the real beneficiaries from the consequence of this Islam-West conflict? It would be no surprise if one found that Jyllands-Posten published Prophet Muhammad's caricatures as a part of a planned game and was funded and encouraged both from the inside and outside of their country, to create a planned religious provocation.

Abdur Rahman Abid
On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP