

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.

School teachers' demands

Private school teachers have called strike for fulfillment of some legitimate demands. We don't support their movement because they earn enough money from private coaching.

Will they stop this business if their salary is increased?
Sumon Dutta
On e-mail

Bangladesh can show the way

The news item 'Seminar on English held in Natore' (19 July) drew my attention though it does not give details of the deliberations. However, one point comes out

not ashamed if his ward is not at ease to write or speak in his mother tongue, as if that is the measure to gauge the latter's devotion to have mastery over English. Hopefully, that is not the case yet with Bangladesh.

Blessed is the person who learns two languages with equal stress on both. Not only that the knowledge of one helps him to understand better the other.

English is no longer the language of our masters as it was during the British days. But we need it, though not at the cost of our mother tongue. Let Bangladesh show the way in which this can be achieved by promoting learning of both English and Bangla simultaneously.
Asok Dasgupta, Kolkata
Rab

privileged people

The rights of marginalised people are the same as my rights. I have the right to education, the right to protect my family, the right to healthcare and the right to practice my religion. In the world today there is the absence of these rights for the poor and what we watch is the brutal misuse of power to keep the system this way. What marginalised and poor populations have not realised is that they outnumber those in power who keep these rights from them. They outnumber people like myself who have these rights that have been absent in their lives. But there will be no rebellion, because despite their outnumbering, they lack a unified voice, stifled by the systematic oppression that promotes a cycle of violence, silence and fear.

Palestine has what other oppressed and marginalised populations have lacked— a stubborn and irrepressible voice. Sometimes that is all you need to begin a domino effect of change. This revolution will be televised and we will be watching it.

Hannah
On e-mail

Interpretation of the holy book

My attention was drawn to a letter published in your daily on 20 July, 2006. First of all I must admit that I am not a specialist on the Holy Quran, Hadith or Sharia but with the little knowledge that I have gathered by reading the Tafsir (explanation) of the Quran, I would like to cite the following lines to clarify the two verses that the learned writer mentioned i.e. verse (a) CIX and (b) IX: 29.

(a) The first one was revealed when the people belonging to influential Quraish tribe of Mecca proposed to the Prophet (Pbuh) that for peaceful co-existence there should be a peace deal. The proposal was like this "One year the idolaters will pray to Allah and one year the Prophet (Pbuh) will pray to their idols." This Sura Kaferun was the reply to that proposal. The proposal was rejected because a Muslim cannot be an idolater for one year and Muslim for another year. This does not mean that Muslims compromised or had a lenient view of their religion in the early days at Mecca as claimed by the writer.

(b) The other verse i.e. IX:29 which has been quoted was revealed in the background of the Battle of Tabuk. Muslims were ordered to fight till the enemy surrendered and agreed to pay Jyzia which is the proof of subordination. Jyzia means exchange. In exchange of safety and security the non-Muslims should pay Jyzia. Poor, handicapped, children, old, women, priests were exempted from paying Jyzia. In this connection Muhammad (Pbuh) said, "If anyone oppresses non-Muslim citizens, I will side with the

oppressed non-Muslims against that oppressor."

The main purpose of writing this letter is that it is better not to comment on such sensitive issues, especially religion.

Commodore AMA Alam (Retd.) BN
New DOHS, Dhaka

Student politics BUET model

Student politics in our country is chaotic. But I think BUET is the only university where student politics is peaceful and positive. Students are carrying out their political activities as well as studies. Student organisations respect each other's views. Student leaders in BUET are not involved in drug or tender business and activists are not engaged in hijacking or toll collection. There is no bloodshed or violence in BUET.

I think all other universities should follow BUET insofar as student politics is concerned.

Sagar Ahmed
Dhaka University

Fitness of MPs

In the last 35 years the Bangladesh government has spent more than USD 100 million, both in local and foreign currency, for the treatment of MPs.

A poor nation like Bangladesh cannot afford to continue spending such a huge amount of money for looking after the MPs, most of whom are otherwise filthy rich, but have not contributed to bringing good governance to Bangladesh.

The Election Commission should constitute a medical board, and ensure that those interested in participating in next general election face the board and get a clean health certificate.

Masud
On e-mail

An opposition conspiracy?

I have always admired the anti-AL camp for their propaganda abilities.

Last weekend, a friend of mine, a die-hard BNP supporter, was visiting me.

He told me how sad he was because apparently Sk. Hasina went to India and convinced them to stop exporting three food items (Dal is one of them) to Bangladesh. Apparently, right after her visit, India declared that they would not be exporting those three items. "How could Hasina do this?" he asked me, quite happy to have gotten me in a corner.

I smiled and said "Are you sure this is for Bangladesh only or are they not exporting these three items to any other country?" Confident as ever, he pushed further to say this was a ploy by the opposition to make the people suffer. He had read it in the papers. I decided that this needed special attention.

I asked him to get in the car and we drove to the nearest Indian grocery store in my town. I asked the storekeeper about these three

items. To my friend's shock, he replied, "Buy as much as you want now, India is not going to export these items for the next six months."

Needless to say, he was very quiet on the drive back home.
Rubel Ahsan
On e-mail

Front page rules

I prefer The Daily Star to update myself about the happenings around. I am not a psychologist but from the depth of my heart I believe that we should not start a day with negative impressions in our mind. The pictures & news that the newspapers are presenting in the front page have a HUGE influence on the readers' minds which affects their productivity during the working hours.

My request is, please consult a psychologist to establish Front Page Rules for the newspapers.

We need to change our attitude but what are we doing for it?
Md Abdul Alim Munshi
On e-mail

Desa harassing customers

I wrote a lengthy letter in your newspaper on November 18, 2003 about Desa's tricks to harass its customers with the intention to bring benefits for some of its corrupt employees and union members. I have a few flats in Mohammadpur where I live and let my flats. Yesterday, I received this month's electricity bills and to my surprise, I noticed in every bill there is a notice typed which says I owe them big amounts of arrears in the hand-written ledger period prior to December 2000. It also says I have to pay all arrears by 31st July 2006 to avoid hefty penalties and surcharges which is only a few days away.

Thirty months ago, I received a notice saying that I owe Desa Tk. 33,000 in one particular meter. In reply to that notice, I asked them to give me a breakdown of the amount relating it to month and year. After that they never bothered me. The interesting thing is that for the same meter they're now asking for Tk. 5,800 for the same ledger period.

Door-to-door bargaining has already been started to mitigate this problem for those unfortunate customers who have lost their five-to-fifteen years old bills.

I request all customers who have received arrear bills NOT to show their bills to the DESA office to prove their innocence, instead ask DESA to give a break-down of your bill, and make a collective pressure group to resist this blackmailing. I also draw attention of the higher authorities of DESA to take immediate action to stop this malpractice to cover the corruption of their employees. I also draw the attention of legal experts to give their opinion whether DESA can ask for 10-15 years old bills which they never demanded in the past.

Iqbal Hussain
Novodoy Housing Society,

Rights of Palestinians

This is a response to a letter written by a "Concerned Muslim" on the above topic. He suggested that the Palestinians should remain satisfied with what they have and not fight for the remainder of their rights because they are powerless. I would like to remind him of a simple fact— Bangladesh fought a relentless nine-month long independence war against Pakistan and eventually earned freedom. But in the process, three million Bangladeshis got killed and thousands of women were raped. Now in hindsight, is it logical to say that Bangladesh should have remained satisfied with what they had instead of losing so many innocent lives? The answer is a definite "NO". Similarly, it is ridiculous to suggest that the Palestinians should stop their fight to earn their legal rights—the right to self determination, the right to reclaim the land that has been forcibly snatched away from them, the right to live in peace in their true homeland. If the Almighty wills, Palestine will one day gain independence.

If the oppressed and repressed ones had not fought for freedom, despite being weak, then America wouldn't have gained independence from Britain, the Indian sub-continent wouldn't have gained independence, Bangladesh wouldn't have gained independence and Gaza wouldn't have gained independence from the terrorist state of Israel. If weak and powerless people had always remained silent then there would not have been any May Day.

I would like my Concerned Muslim brother to suggest ways that will help Palestinians to get back their legal rights, instead of making comments that will demean their aspiration for freedom.

Sameer Ahmad Khan Mojlish, Dhanmondi, Dhaka



Mohammedpur, Dhaka

PHOTO: AFP

Controversial voter list

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on Tuesday refused to allocate funds again for updating the voter list (The Supreme Court on May 3 upheld the HC directives on voter list, dismissing the EC's appeal against that) and said the EC should have complied with the HC directives in preparing the voter list. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MAAziz last month disclosed that following suggestions from the law minister and the attorney general,

they had continued the task of preparing a fresh voter list ignoring the January 4 High Court (HC) directives for revising the existing voter list. "As per rules, the Election Commission sought opinion of the law ministry and the attorney general. On receipt of their suggestions, the EC continued preparing a fresh voter list and published a draft of it," he said. The secretary wondered why the EC would take responsibility for wastage of money. "Those who took the decision [on voter list ignoring the HC order] will be responsible," the secretary said. "As per rules, the Election Commission sought

opinion of the law ministry and the attorney general. On receipt of their suggestions, the EC continued preparing a fresh voter list and published a draft of it," he said.

If that is the truth, then the law minister and the attorney general are fully responsible for preparation of that voter list.
Gopal Sengupta
On e-mail

Muslim world, US and Israel



Hezbollah's kidnapping was just another perfect opportunity for Israel to launch a tactical war on Lebanon. Their aim is to draw Syria & Iran into a regional war and eventually occupy Syria & destroy Iran's nuke facilities. It now seems inevitable that more & more Muslim lands & wealth will go under the control of the Zionist State of Israel.

It is known for a fact that American & British leaders not only shift their allegiance to Israel the moment they are sworn into their respective offices,

but they also very cleverly make the ordinary American & Brits die for this Zionist State.

On the flip side, the amazing ineffectiveness of the leaders of the Islamic world in dealing with the Zionist State of Israel also raises a similar question as to who they are really loyal to:

Israel or the Muslim ummah?
Syed Husain
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Israeli air strikes are killing a large number of people in Lebanon. Most of them are children and civilians. Beirut is the worst hit place and the situation there is turning into a humanitarian crisis.

The international community must respond to the crisis immediately.
Sanwar Khan
Uttara, Dhaka

In front of your TV set, watching eagerly BBC or CNN - the international news agencies of democratic countries, you may be wondering where are the voices of the thousands of children, men and women from Southern Lebanon. Sufferings of the people uprooted from their homes under the blitz

Israeli shells have vanished in the ether, unable to find their way in the media. Well, you may argue otherwise. Its not in the ether, the plight of humanity is buried under the sands of Texas.

BBC's journalists are busy covering the 'dispute' between Zidane and Materazzi; And CNN? Well readers, you know it. Where is the time to focus the cameras at the nozzles of Israeli tanks, shelling the human-like creatures living in the Gaza and southern Lebanon? They are just another endangered species on the earth, may be of interest to the National Geography.

Enough of analogy. The western media is trying to portray, with their limited and biased coverage, that it is just another front against terrorism. And in the name of fighting terror, everything is justifiable.

Bombing hospitals, schools, houses, mosques, you name it. Two sacred lives of Israeli soldiers, descendants of the chosen people, worth more than thousands of worthless Arabs, most of whom are 'terrorists', have been lost.

The world has also seen the pathetic role played by the UN, which is supposed to be the watchdog of world peace. Mr. Kofi Annan may reply with a murmur that the UN has played its role, by proposing to deploy international forces in the region. Not surprisingly, the proposal was vehemently declined by Israel. It simply proves the banality of the UN proposal. Rest of the world has also supposedly done its duty by supporting the UN proposal.

The Organisation of Islamic Conference (not to be confused with "Oh, I SEE"), was so shocked by the atrocities of

Israel forces, that it lost its words to express any views. We have to wait until OIC recovers from the comma.

Israeli atrocities in southern Lebanon offer a striking similarity to Bangladesh's liberation war. When the Pakistani army showed its brutality by killing thousands of unarmed innocent men, women and children, neither the West nor the Muslim world came forward with a sympathetic voice. Bangladesh had to fight its own war, like the Palestinians are fighting now in Gaza, West Bank and refugee camps in Lebanon. Let the media realise it soon.
F. H. Rana
Saudi Arabia

I would like to congratulate Ayasha (July 21st) for her balanced e-mail. It is indeed very rare to hear such words from a Muslim or Bangladeshi (I



am assuming you are one forgive me if I am wrong). It is true that we are blinded by our religion to a large extent. We blame all our problems on America yet all of us want to live there. Once we get the opportunity to live there and gain all the advantages of the "American life" we still want to backbite about them and say, "Americans are foolish and Americans live a miserable life and that they have no morals etc."

Let's now go back to the original topic of Lebanon-Israeli conflict. I am not a historian, as a matter of fact I know very little about history but I look at the near past, the present and at the future. Repeatedly during my last 6 years of keeping track of the news I have seen that every time there is a ceasefire in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinians have to mess it up. And yes every single time.

Now just imagine this scenario Hamas is as powerful as the Israelis and have backing of some strong nations and strong military strength and let's assume Israel to be a poor overpopulated country (like current Palestine) with mass unemployment and weak military --- what would have Hamas done?

An uncle asked me if there is a burning fire in two houses in one there is a Muslim and one there is a Jew which house will you go to I answered whichever house comes first as a Muslim I have read the Holy Quran and understood that God has told us to treat everyone equally and treat every

person as a human irrespective of race religion and colour. If my brother is a murderer he remains a murderer similarly if Hezbollah followers are terrorists they remain terrorists and they should be looked down upon whether they are Muslim, Christian or Jewish.

Finally, I also know that most people will look into my email as

"O that's another white washed American who calls himself Muslim" its time we started looking at the cup as half full and drinking off that instead of complaining that it's half empty then spilling it and then dying of thirst.

Shadman
University of Toronto



PHOTOS: AFP