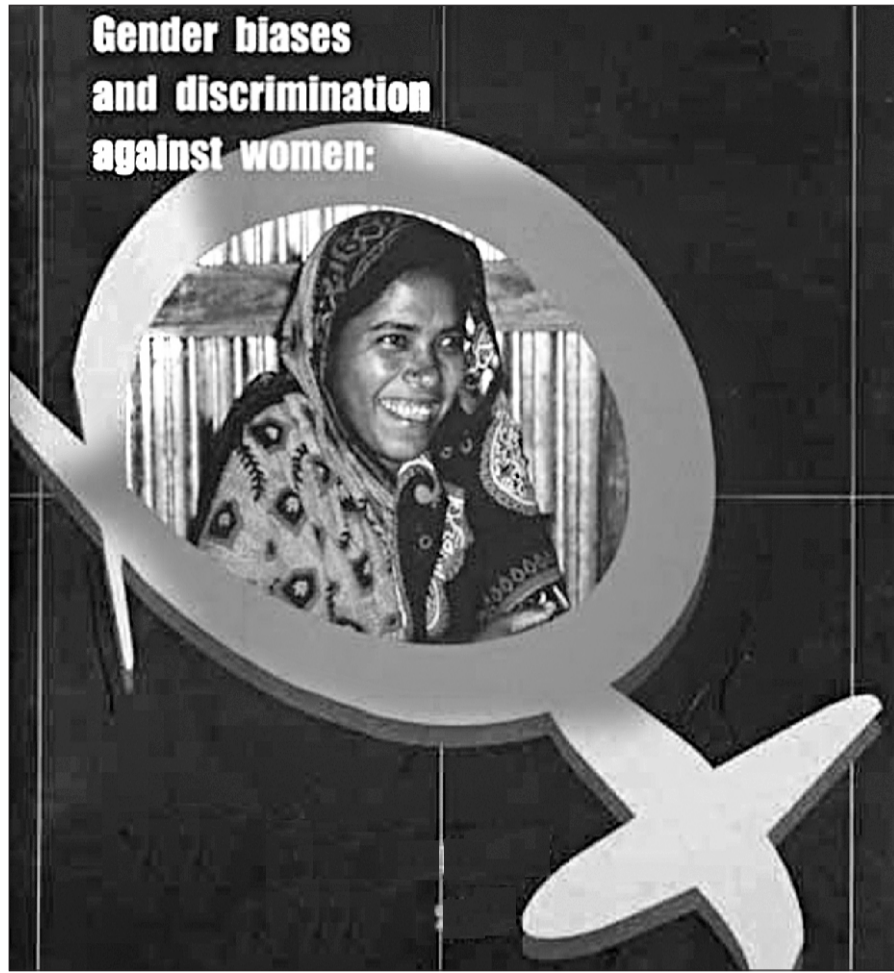


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Gender discrimination - a reply



Rehela Yasmin (July 28) has very unswervingly and clearly pointed out one of the main issues that has held back the economic growth of the country - gender discrimination. With all due respect to her, however, I would like to add one point, which the writer has not put so much emphasis on. Though it is important to educate the girls in Bangladesh, we should also remember how important it is to educate the men about empowering women. Logically, men are pursuing more in academic matters yet they are not made aware of the rights of women.

If we teach boys from an earlier age about human rights, about giving freedom to their sisters then they will grow up with that mentality and show an equal amount of respect to other female students, colleagues and their own wives. That way, both the genders will understand each other's importance and together can battle for human rights.

We must not overlook the built-in problems.
Shayera Moula
 Dept. Of English and Humanities
 BRAC University

A misunderstood religion

I am an American Fulbright fellow in Bangladesh, researching engagement between development organisations and imams and the increasingly active role of imams in community development.

In America, misinformation and negative press concerning Islam is widespread—a manifestation of ignorance and arrogance against a backdrop of a misguided crusade against "terror". However, many Americans and I reject this interpretation of Islam, promoting education and critical consciousness instead. Prior to visiting Bangladesh, I countered misinformation about Islam and advocated for the inherent humanity of all,

irrespective of religion, with academic and theoretical arguments. But since being welcomed here by scores of imams as their daughter and sister, the relation has become fiercely personal. Personal experience carries a weight unmatched by purely intellectualised arguments, and I can now offer up both in the pursuit of social justice and tolerance.

Bridget Kustin
 Ring Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Is student politics needed?

The question "Is student politics needed?" has really drawn my attention. According to the prevailing situation of our country, it's now a sensitive issue. There may be

great controversy whether student politics is needed or not. But I feel in most cases, the young students who are innocent and immature are utilised by political leaders to achieve their selfish motives. They are used like pawns.

The standard of education in our country is declining. We are unable to compete with the technologically advanced world in most areas. And that is the issue which we should concentrate on.
Md. Wazed
 Department of English
 International Islamic University,
 Chittagong

A good article

I have read Muhammad Zamir's article "Search for peace through violence?", published on July 29,

2006.

It is one of the best articles I've read out there yet on this situation and how things are being handled right now. And his article MAKES A LOT OF SENSE to all this madness.

I wish there were more out there like this article for ALL to read.
Cindy Matthews
 Portland, Oregon, USA

Proposed still mills

There are two main types of coal. They are thermal coal and coking coal. Thermal coal is used for electricity generation, whereas coking coal is primarily used in the steel mills. Coking coal is a higher-quality coal because it is able to withstand more heat, which is necessary in the manufacture of steel. In

Bangladesh, coking coal may not be found but it can be imported from abroad to use in the proposed Tata steel mills in Bangladesh. All the steel mills of China and Japan use imported coking coal. If they can run their steel mills profitably, Tata can also run their proposed steel mills using imported coking coal profitably.

If they insist on using gas in the manufacture of steel, they should pay the right price which should be linked to the international price of coking coal.

Lutful Karim
 Sydney, Australia

Tortured children

When will the news media start talking about abuse of children? We must, as normal human beings, not let children work as domestic helps. We Bangladeshis try to picture ourselves as most caring and family oriented people. Actually, we are the most ruthless humans who have no sympathy even for the little boys and girls.

Sawgat Chowdhury
 On email

Back to square one?

I feel a mix of bewilderment and despair. All this time, we were hearing that the reason behind the prime minister's popularity (and that of her party) was the uncompromising refusal to cooperate with the military dictator Ershad. Yet it seems now that it is going to be reversed with a possibility of him becoming president again, facilitated by the uncompromising leader herself.

Meanwhile, we hear the other former prime minister shouting herself hoarse about secularism and yet we know in the past and perhaps now there have been discussions with fundamentalists in a bid to grab power.

So, can the people of Bangladesh ask, what were all the *andolans* and *hartals* for? Why did we have to shed so much blood if we are repeating the cycle? Only this time, the tragedy is we are doing it under the pretext of democracy. Shame on us.

Sanjoy Kumar Nath
 Chittagong

Sectarian violence

On July 14, a Sunni suicide bomber blew himself up outside the home of a Pakistani Shiite cleric Allama Hassan Turabi, killing the cleric and his bodyguards and triggering a riot in the port city of Karachi. The Daily Times, Lahore, reported on July 27 that the police have identified the young suicide bomber as Abdul Karim, a 16-year-old student hailing from Bangladesh.

Karim was studying in a Karachi madrasa for the last two years. The police also released a pre-recorded video statement left behind by the bomber. Karim said in the statement that he was acting on his own will and nobody forced him to do so.

In the video, Karim asked his family members to pray for him and assured them that he would surely go to heaven. He also asked his brother to prepare himself for a similar act.

Why did a young Bangladeshi Sunni Muslim kill a prominent fellow Shia Muslim?

The answer may be for the same reason. Sunni extremists are literally butchering their fellow Shiite Muslims in Iraq.

While the world's attention remains focused on the conflict between Lebanon's Shiite militia Hezbollah and Israel, far more Shiite Muslims are being slaughtered by fellow Sunni Muslims in Iraq. While 15 days of conflict in Lebanon have led to the death of 600 Lebanese and 50 Israelis, more than 100 Shiite Muslims are being killed every day by the Sunni extremists in Iraq and Shites are also retaliating by killing, albeit in much smaller numbers, Sunnis.

Although the Sunni minority lost their grip on power after the US invasion, they are now attacking the Shites with a viciousness not seen before. Only yesterday (July 27), at the height of Israeli-Hezbollah air and rocket attacks which killed about 30 Lebanese and 9 Israelis, rocket and mortar attacks on a Shiite residential area in Baghdad killed at least 40.

A car bomb also exploded at the same time in the Shiite commercial district of Karadah, injuring more than 150. A statement posted on a Sunni extremist website claimed responsibility in the name of Al-Sahaba Soldiers, a Sunni extremist group. The statement said that the attack was "in response to Shiite crimes".

The killing of a Pakistani Shiite cleric by a young Bangladeshi Sunni extremist demonstrates that a war is going between the Shiite and Sunni sects.

Mahmood Elahi
 Ottawa, Canada

Tree plantation

In our life and economy trees play an important role. Bangladesh is a lower riparian country. High lands are the best suitable places to plant trees. There are many roads and highways in our country. We can plant trees on both sides of these roads and highways. Again in the villages there are many places which can be used for tree plantation. The sites and areas that are lying unused can be used too. June and July are the best time for tree plantation; the plantation programme should be expanded to the remote corners of the country.

Our economy is dependent on agriculture. Again our agriculture depends on rain. So trees play a vital role on our climate, trees save us from flood and other calamities.



Dept of English
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 Chittagong.



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8x3

6x3