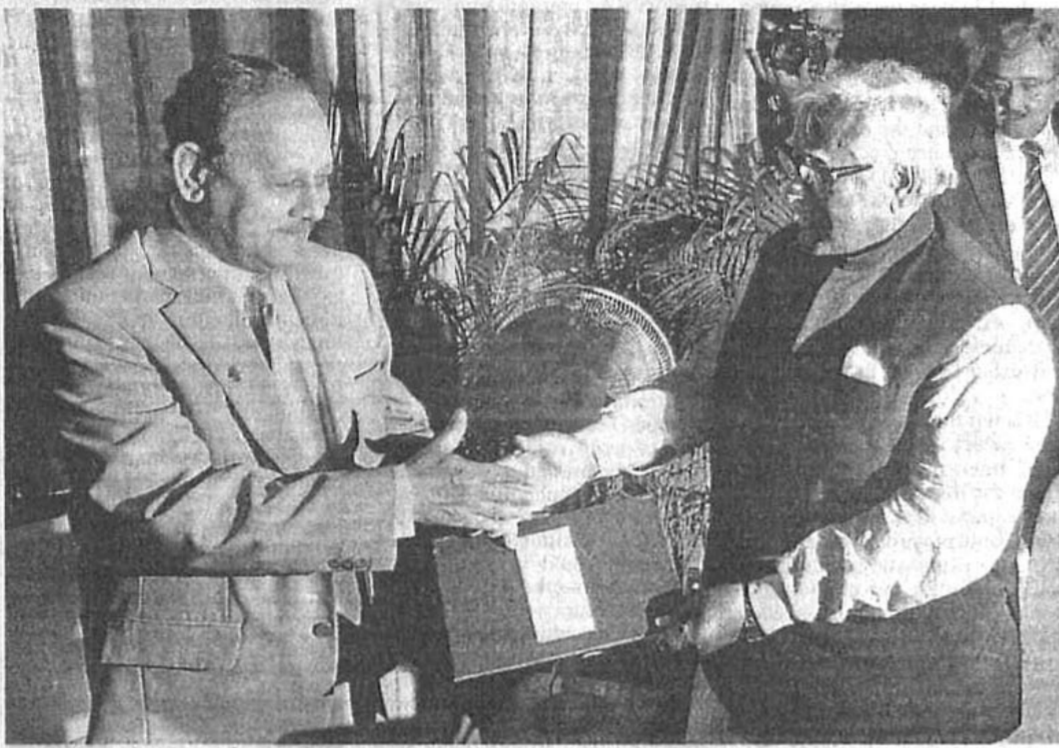




Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Opposition demands

The 14-party opposition alliance has submitted a 31 point demand to the BNP. They have also repeatedly made clear that only through the acceptance of these demands and their implementation, a free and fair election is possible. Nobody can argue with the paramount need for holding an election which is free and fair. This is a prerequisite for democratic governance. As a citizen, I request The Daily Star to publish these 31 demands put forward by the opposition alliance and their detailed justification against each demand. I also request the BNP and the Awami League to wrap up their discussions at the earliest, in a manner that brings peace and security to Bangladesh, which is unfortunately absent at present. Enough is enough! Wahidun Nabi Gulshan-1, Dhaka



come to power. The political parties are not at all interested in the welfare of the country. In the parliamentary form of government, the opposition is

the mirror of the government. But in our context the government and the opposition are in a state of perpetual conflict. This can be anything but democracy.

We need leaders capable of steering us out of the political morass. Abu Kabir University of East London, London

Why this delay?

It was reported in a satellite news channel that some hurdles had appeared in the execution of the militants awarded death penalty by court. Initially, it was said that if no appeal was made by them or on their behalf, the court order would be executed in early October 2006, and now the situation has changed due to the holy month of Ramadan. The current status is that the relevant ministry is looking for a way to overcome the barriers on the way to their execution.

One thing is very clear today that no peace loving people in the world support militancy. Therefore, there is no reason to show any mercy to the convicted militants awaiting execution. But one question is not clear enough, have they received a fair trial? Have the final verdicts been delivered on all the cases? Which means a full and complete trial has been carried out as per the law and no trial is pending.

The other issue is how much transparent the trial was. The issue being very

sensitive everywhere, a correct picture is difficult to obtain unless the militants choose to speak. Perhaps one very important issue is remaining in dark i.e. who encouraged these militants, who made funds available

and who did the training? Perhaps these are very important to combat future terrorist activities in Bangladesh. The government might come up with some authentic information after they have completed fact

finding on the emergence of militancy in Bangladesh. If not done yet, they should consider initiating the process before they hand over power in late October. A reader On e-mail



Iraq situation

Ambassador Kazi Anwarul Masud has raised important issues about the U.S. failure to bring democracy and stability in Iraq. Instead of bringing freedom and peace, Iraq has become a recruiting ground for future jihadists. Surely, when all of U.S. intelligence agencies declare that terrorist threat is spreading and multiplying in Iraq, this should be reason enough for the Americans to seriously reconsider the strategy in Iraq and elsewhere. This leads us to the question: should America leave Iraq for Sunnis and Shiites to fight it out among themselves?

In a recently published book 'Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat', Richard H. Schultz, and Andrew J. Dew, both professors at the Boston University, seem to argue for this. They argue that some societies are more warlike than others and they fight for such values as family honour and religious fervour and their tribal and sectarian loyalties supersede their national loyalties. This explains why during the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein brutalised Iraq's Shiite majority whom he suspected to be sympathetic to Shiite Iran. This also explains why many Iraqi Shiite leaders sought refuge in Iran at a time when Iraq was fighting a war against Iran. This also explains why instead of fighting jointly against the American occupation, the Sunnis and Shiites are slaughtering each other, destroying each other's mosques and killing each other's clerics.

The authors argue that America cannot bring any semblance of democracy in such a tribal society and so-called humanitarian intervention to oust a local tyrant will

inevitably fail. Saddam Hussein was a brutal tyrant, whose Sunni followers terrorised the Shiites who are the majority. The mass killing of the Shiites and gassing of non-Arab Sunni Kurds are well known. But the Shiites proved to be no better. Once the Sunnis were ousted from power by the American-led coalition forces, they are killing the Sunnis. The Shiite militias are now kidnapping, torturing and murdering the Sunnis in the same way once dominant Sunnis oppressed the Shiites.

This is why the Shia-Sunni conflict is a bloody mess and the Americans are clearly incapable of cleaning it. Only the American forces are caught in the crossfire and killed in large numbers.

Iraq's oil resources are not nearly enough to justify American casualties. Majority of Americans also want a quick and complete withdrawal of American troops and it may not be long before the Americans leave Iraq to its misery. But then the question comes to mind: Will the sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites remain confined to Iraq and not engulf the region in a broader Shia-Sunni war involving Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and even Turkey? No one is in a position to answer this question. Mahmood Elahi Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

Doctor's degrees

Many doctors in our country have a tendency to exaggerate their degrees for commercial purposes. As the majority of our people are illiterate, they are unable to detect the exaggeration of the degrees of the doctors they go to. In medical science MBBS and MD are recognised graduation degrees received

from Bangladesh and Russia respectively. BDS is a recognised dental graduation degree. MD and MS are recognised graduation degrees received from Bangladesh while FCPS, DLO, D (ortho and card), DDV, DCO, DTCD, etc are recognised post graduate diplomas.

Upon completion of any diploma course from abroad by a doctor, connecting papers in support of his/her diploma must be submitted to the BMDC (Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council) for necessary scrutiny and approval. Higher degrees received from home and abroad would be treated as 'invalid' without the approval of BMDC. But many doctors in our country are not using their degrees accordingly. They are using irrelevant, false, meaningless degrees which are not at all related to their professional degrees. They are doing so with a view to attracting and getting patients and higher fees. Some doctors are using BCS as a higher degree.

Obviously BCS is not a degree of a doctor. To qualify for the government service one has to appear at the BCS examinations. Besides, some use FRSH (London) as a degree in their signboard and prescription although it is not a professional degree of a doctor. 'FRSH' is the abbreviation of the 'Fellow of Royal Society of Health'. And it is nothing but a membership. Membership is not a degree at all. An embargo has been imposed by the society on its use as a degree. In fact, in our country, lots of doctors are exaggerating their degrees at their own sweet will.

The authorities should look into the matter in the public interest. Emran Hossain Arif Race Course, Comilla

Mr. Foley's follies!

Mr. Foley, the Florida Congressman, resigned from the US House of Representatives on September 29, 2006 a day after a media disclosure of his lurid emails to his pages. It was an exposure of a great hypocrite not just because the Republicans are big on appropriate moral conduct and family values but also because Mr. Foley himself was once a co-chairman of the House's committee to protect missing and exploited children. Mr. Foley's follies cannot be minimised but these are not simply failings of a politician; in conducting himself in a morally appropriate manner, rather this episode illustrated the point that American public hold their politicians to morally high standards. I raise this matter not to flay him, or to praise him for his courage of acknowledging his failings and resigning. I dwell on this matter to raise issues of ethics in politics. It may be worth remembering that former U.S. president Clinton's troubles with sex scandals not only undermined him but also in my opinion had huge historical consequences. For example, had there been no Monica Lewinsky affair, Mr. Gore would have been the 43rd president of the United States, not Mr. George W. Bush. America would not be in deficits, the world would not be a mess and many young Americans would still be walking as thousands elsewhere. And we would have Kyoto Protocol sealed.

Now in place of Bill Clinton had it been Woody Allen then there would be no problem. The world of art and cinema has a different moral standard. It is only a gross misconduct - or the allegation of it - that would land one in trouble as the case of Michael Jackson illus-

trated. It is the politicians that American people hold in high standards of morality. I only wish the Americans expanded that moral criterion to include conducts beyond personal and outside their national borders, for example, matters related to war.

In terms of differing standards Europe and America present striking contrasts. I know I should not use Europe as a monolithic category because there are marked differences between Poland and Germany, or United Kingdom and France. For example, in Germany and France many were surprised by the Monica affair as to why it was an issue in the first place. In France, it is rumoured (I say rumour, so don't contemplate law suits!) that one of the past presidents not too long ago had an affair with the then (female) prime minister. My source is not any tabloid but a serious French social scientist. And she told me the story somewhat approvingly.

In Bangladesh, some people often use such derogatory terms as "prostitutes" to describe the politicians. This label is highly inappropriate with some rare exceptions.

How often politicians lie in Bangladesh? And what are the consequences, apart from an occasional editorial rebuff? Habibul Haque Khondker The writer is a sociologist

The excruciating Dhaka

Dhaka, the capital of our beloved motherland, is commonly recognised as the city of everlasting sporadic load shedding, contaminated ponds, noxious odour (from dumps of dumped filth on the streets), unrestrained crime, vio-

lence and other such mayhem. Anarchy, depravity, sordidness and egocentrism are surely the essence of its genesis. The victims of these excruciating flaws obviously have to be us, the resident of this horrendous city.

My life has always been confined to my dwelling in this city. Prolonged violence, crime, inadequate grounds and other shortcomings of the metropolis are the reasons behind this incarceration. My school is situated at Dhanmondi and I regularly travel from Nikunja to that place. While coming back, I always have to encounter massive congestion of traffic caused by the illegal parking of numerous vehicles beside the curb of the sidewalks of the "national highway". This reduces traffic flow and later clogs up the whole thoroughfare. Invaluable hours have to be wasted for the clearance of the congestion. Moreover, the so-called "national highway" lacks security.

Recently, a new era of crime on the streets of Dhaka has taken birth; criminals (mainly the youth of this generation) go mugging pedestrians even on the "national highway", using mace like substance to immobilise their target and to their amusement they sometimes employ violence. These felons team up with the local cab and CNG drivers to dupe the vulnerable into their trap.

I urge the government to implement initiatives to reduce load shedding, to implement schemes to construct new parks and lakes, to adopt new policies for controlling traffic, to extensively proclaim interdicts of parking on highways and to deploy armed forces on highways to protect

people. Christopher Sangma Lake City, Concord Real Estate, Dhaka

An art of sorts

Art and creativity is a major factor in life of all humans. Not only is it a form of expressing our ideas but also a proud feeling when you master it as a craft that very few others have. There are different types of art, visual arts, music, songs etcetera. But as time passed by and humans evolved, time has affected this medium vastly. Over generations the different forms have changed to better suit the world we live in today.

However, some of these changes do not compliment art for what it is, rather are used for destructive purposes such as wall graffiti and caricatures. Today almost every desk or bench is heavily vandalised with personal comments, abusive remarks, doodles and opposing portraits. Even the walls of every building are deeply scarred with such forms of art that offend the viewers, rather than inspiring them and labels art as an example of corruption!

No matter how we look at it, it seems that time has done enough damage to that point where it cannot be undone. On the other hand, there is still the factor that we have been ignoring from the beginning. The factor that has led to this point where all the art we see are disfigured guitars, and wall graffiti.

Art is a medium that helps us communicate with others. It is a method that uses our creativeness and inspires others with our visions. But nowadays art is one of those things that have no significant value in our society. It has become a waste of time that nobody bothers about.

But when everyone is trying to suppress these expressions, the artist eventually leaks out. He creates something desperately trying to grab people's attention; and ends up with a meaningless blob of paint that fails to capture us.

Poor creativity is another reason why art has been declining over time. There are some artists who understand their feeling and can skillfully portray it on paper and others who do not realise the true meaning of art and try to copy others, creating something that fails to convey their message. Such works not only scar the true artists but also show their lack of skill and ability to understand themselves.

The other reason why art has fallen is the use of this medium for wrong purposes. Such as using art to offend others, show people, oppose cultures and their beliefs etc... Such actions lessen people's appreciation of art and affect its importance as well. Another good example is pornography. Art is supposed to inspire people, not offending others through pictures that give people strange ideas and lures us into various situations. Abrar Monsur, One-mail

Corruption in BD

How the Finance Minister uttered: "... I am fed up with the remarks of donors about corruption and don't want to hear anything more from you ... we don't like this kind of remarks now, we liked those in the past ..." Now, the Minister must clarify - is it because he wants to claim that there is no corruption in this country any more? Otherwise, our leaders have to be accountable to someone, especially the people who are providing the money for us to make ends meet. CNR, Chittagong



An apology to our shooters

I apologise to our national pride, shooter Atique who brought laurel to our poor sports heritage and also to his colleagues who were beaten, humiliated by the police. I was a thousand miles away from Dhaka in a neighbouring country when this atrocity was meted out to them. I was glancing at the national dailies to keep me updated with the developments in our political arena tangled in the elusive dialogue. I was not only shocked but also felt guilty at the inhuman act of policemen, the community with whom I served for 28 years. I talked to my wife in the country to know

the real situation. She wept for the boys whom she never met or knew. On return to my beloved metropolis, I was seriously admonished by one of my friends for the mischief of my ex-colleagues, though he very well knows that I retired from police service five years back.

I read the piled up newspapers and found that the DMP police commissioner, and even the state minister, defended the police officers.

I on my behalf as a retired police officer and on behalf of many other shocked sympathisers offer apology to our national shooters. Boys!

you have brought honour to the nation and we hapless citizens could not even protect you from the batons which we purchased with taxpayers' money. This is not your shame, rather it is a shame to the nation. We share it with you as we have shared your glory. M. Sanaul Haq Uttara, Dhaka

Once again there was an incident created by our heroic (!) policemen. This time they pounced on our national shooters, due to whom Bangladesh at least have a chance to win a medal or two. Why did they do this? Because

one of their bosses' driver was refused parking. There are lots of bosses, IG, DIGs, etc and I wonder whether they have any real work to do. They do not go after Kargali Zakir and get Sgt. Ahad (I salute this man, who gave his life for performing his duty) killed, but they are very good at attacking innocent people with all their vigour. They do not regret the misdeeds of their fellows, rather they provide strong cover to them. When this will change? How many policemen feel ashamed at their fellow members' misdeeds?

I think we should socially boycott these kind people who

abuse power. Parvez Monon Ashraf Dallas, Texas, USA

They already had the dubious record of beating up or shooting to death a variety of people - farmers, students, garment workers photo journalists and so on. Yet the butcher's bill had some lacunae. Perhaps, it is the reason why they swooped on the innocuous shooters.

May be those valiant law enforcers resorted to a beating-frenzy to give the sportsmen a lesson or two about shooting. Whereas the players shoot at the dumb bull's eye, those members of that state-

machinery shoot to kill or at least to maim a person for his whole life. In other words, the sportsmen had put the whole act of shooting into ignominy! Certainly, shooting is not a child's play. Nor is a rifle a plaything to be used to amuse the spectators. As a result those protectors of citizens wanted to put things right. After all, some of them are licensed to kill!

The spectre of Jaliwanwalabagh still haunts this part of this world. Otherwise, how come those so-called law enforcers treat the civilians in such a bestial manner? Zabed Wall Pahartoli, Chittagong

