

Supporting the "American opinion"

I agree with the "American opinion". First of all our identity should be Bangladeshi not Muslim. Islam try to put everyone under one umbrella but it does not work since we all have different culture and language.

Yes as a superpower the USA has done a lot of bad things but if you look at the so-called Muslim countries they have done worse. In the county like Saudi Arabia you don't even have freedom of speech. When the Muslim kill Muslim we don't say anything but when westerners does, we get out of control. When the Taliban government were killing afghan people for last 10 years I haven't heard anyone saying anything or crying for them. When Iran and Iraq were in war no one protested. So let's be realistic.

I know from experience that American people will treat you 100 times better than those Arabs and Muslims. They call us Bangladeshi *miskins* (beggars), but you will never hear that kind of word from an American.

So it's my request to the fellow Bangladeshis, if you want to get ahead in life, lets support USA not the Arabs.

Kawsar Khan
Michigan, USA, *o/e-mail*

Stop war

I do not understand what the Americans are doing in Afghanistan. It appears the 'war' here will not stop before at least 6,000 poor and innocent people perish.

A citizen
Dhaka

Bush, Laden and company

Surly it is time for President George W. Bush to come clean and explain his and his families' connection to Osama Bin Laden and family. In a special BBC Newsnight investigation (broadcast on 6th September) it was alleged in a damning indictment of the two presidents, Bush and Bush, that America was itself to blame for the events of 11th September because the US administration was using "kid gloves" in tracking down Osama Bin Laden and "other fanatics linked to Saudi Arabia".

The investigation, which the BBC claimed was based on a secret FBI document, numbered 1991-WF213589 and emanating out of the FBI's Washington field office, alleged that the cynicism of the American establishment and "connections between the CIA and Saudi Arabia and the Bush men and Bin Ladens" may have been the real cause of the deaths of thousands in the World Trade Centre attacks.

In a reiteration of a now well-known claim by one of George W. Bush's former business partners, the BBC said he made his first million twenty years ago on the back of a company financed by Osama's elder brother, Salem. But it added the more disturbing assertion that both presidents Bush had lucrative stakes along with the Bin Ladens in Carlyle Corporation, a small private company which has gone on to become one of America's biggest defence contractors. The Bin Ladens sold their stake in Carlyle soon after the 11th September.

Paul Reed
Manchester, England, *o/e-mail*

Atrocities on minority

It is so disgusting that the government has failed to take appropriate measures to protect the minorities and their basic rights to live safely. The hooliganism unleashed by the ruling party, BNP, after the recent election in Bangladesh is reprehensible. The newspaper accounts and the appeals by many diplomatic missions asking the government to stop the atrocities on the minorities fell on deaf ears.

It is sad that Pakistan and Bangladesh have been in a similar mould when it comes to the plight of minorities! It is not enough to express merely condemnation; the criminals must be brought to justice.

If there are conscientious human beings in Bangladesh, they are hanging their heads in shame, knowing fully well about what has been happening to the Hindu minorities.

Sanavisa, o/e-mail

The rise of fundamentalism

At a time when the whole world is consumed with events of September 11 and the bombing of Afghanistan brutal attacks on the minorities in Bangladesh have gone unnoticed.

Since BNP came to power, attacks on Hindus-- traditionally regarded as supporters of the Awami League-- have increased. Hindu men have been beaten up, Hindu women raped, and their homes and businesses set on fire in other parts of the country.

this is not the case with the Hindus born in Bangladesh. Every Hindu is coined as a sure supporter of the Awami League.

We must act now before it is too late.

Dr. M. K. Hassan
Berlin, *o/e-mail*

"We are ashamed"

I would like to add my voice in support of the concerns raised by Mr. Kamal Haq in his letter "We Are Ashamed" (October 30). The letter was on the induction of Mr. Nizami and Mr. Mujahid from Jamaat-e-Islami as ministers in the new administration in Bangladesh.

insult to the whole nation. I would request Mr. Haq to make a statement on behalf of all these people. We are really ashamed.

Actizen, o/e-mail

I'm really shocked and in total disbelief that someone like "Mr Shuvo" will defend the ministers from Jamaat-e-Islami in a way that only a "Jamat" person can do in response to the mail "We are ashamed" by Mr Kamal.

Mr Kamal was heartened by the induction of these two people in the cabinet and only requested that they be not allowed to desecrate the soul of the martyrs. I totally

no leader or officials have condemned these acts and even any newspaper didn't bother to highlight this news.

Just because America is attacking Afghanistan, many Muslims have got angry and hateful against America and the Christians. Why can't these people consider the massacres committed by Muslims against Christians in Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Philippines?

Hope people around the world would get real, be open-minded, find the truth and stop using religion to express their hatred.

A Christian
Dhaka, *o/e-mail*

Office timing and weekly holiday

The present office timing and weekly holiday, although not ideal, could have been left undisturbed. First of all, let me say my wife the revised arrangement is not satisfactory. International communication problem, which is one of the main reasons for demanding change in weekly holiday, became even worse with offices closing at 2 PM on Thursday. In addition to Friday, Saturday and Sunday no on-line communication during office hours will be possible on Thursday also with countries 5 hours behind us in timing. It is true that the time difference is a problem we have to live with, but we must try to minimise it as much as possible. Reduction of the daily working time by one hour each day and three hours on Thursday will more than proportionately reduce productivity. Moreover, it will be difficult for the outsiders to visit offices on business within working hours after beating traffic jam, especially in Dhaka City. With an extra working day in a week there will be 20 per cent increase in office trips with resultant traffic congestion, additional burden on road capacity, more fuel burnt, more pollution etc. The pleasure and relaxation of a long week-end will be gone and most social functions will have to be held and pleasure trips made on Friday which has been declared as the weekly holiday for Jumma Prayer. Many officials will be forced to bring their family to cities where they work, as they will not be able to visit their families during the short week-ends. This will increase the congestion of cities. Half an hour recess for prayer and lunch is hardly adequate. This existing deficiency in office timing has been addressed while revising the timing.

The following arrangement may be a good compromise addressing all the problems mentioned above:

- 1. Office timing 9 AM to 5 PM with 1 hour break from 1 to 2 PM, except on Friday.
- 2. Weekly holiday on Sunday
- 3. Same office timing for Friday only with a longer recess of 2 hours from 12:30 to 2:30 PM.
- 4. First and third Saturdays of the month closed (or second and third Saturdays if the first day of the month is a holiday).

This arrangement will result in 41 hour longer weeks and 34 hour shorter weeks, that is an average of 37.5 working hours as at present and as also according to the revised timing announced by the government.

AHK, o/e-mail

The new office timing

I can't find any coincidence between economy friendly talking and weekly holiday on Friday and half day on Thursday. Bangladesh is four to six hours ahead of most of the European countries. That is when our office in Bangladesh closes on Thursday at 2 pm, European people will start their office. Again, Friday, Saturday, Sunday means total four days out of communication with the European countries. How will the PM prosper the country keeping four days blocked? However, I appreciate the office timing from 9 to 4.

Abul Hasnat
Manchester, UK, *o/e-mail*

Holiday hurdle

After much parlay on weekly holiday, is this what the business community wanted? People would like to know what clarification or objective does this new government have in changing our past holiday of full day Friday and Saturday to

half day on Thursday and Friday full.

I am sure it's perceived by everyone that now we are cut off from western countries by half a day more!

This surly would add to the miseries of those who were actually having a sigh of relief on hearing the new government's assurance to reverse the weekly holiday.

If this holiday is actually maintained then we are surly putting up with a piece of hurdle rather than taking it off.

I earnestly believe that this decision will be given a second thought. We want to see Sunday as our weekly holiday as this really has nothing to do with religion.

Obayed Ullah
Ex-Manager
Gulshan, Dhaka, *o/e-mail*

Anis S. Ahmad, o/e-mail

Corruption at its worst

The Finance Minister's decision to cancel the NAM summit was indeed a bold and appropriate step. For a country like ours where people cannot afford basic necessities of life the irresponsible action of any government to spend thousands of crore of taka to hold a summit is simply unjustified.

The Finance Minister should take such actions in many other sectors where resources are drained without concern for economy and future of our nation.

We see demands for more infrastructures but what is lacking is the need to make people aware of conserving and then making better utilization of the resources.

Yet we see more interest in the mega projects. The private sector, the international agency recipe for disaster has brought more corruption and drainage than has been in the public sector. More unemploy-

country. It achieved its goal in the Pakistan era. After the emergence of Bangladesh its role was glorious from 1972 to 1990. But after that it failed to play its role.

I was astonished to know that a loan form is now sold at Tk. 1,000/-, which was Tk. 200/- only 2/3 years ago. I request the bank authority to cut down the price of loan form and fix to 200/- again.

At the same time I request Bangladesh Bank and the government of Bangladesh to hand over sufficient funds to BSB for financing medium and large scale industries in the country.

Obayed Ullah
Ex-Manager
Gulshan, Dhaka, *o/e-mail*

A need for concrete evidence

Recently, the Awami League accused President Shahabuddin Ahmed of supporting the BNP government in the election, and also for reading out the inaugural speech prepared by the present government on the first session of the "8th parliament".

While doing so, AL conveniently forgot that the law for delivery of the inaugural speech by the President would be prepared and approved by the ruling party and the law was enacted then in 1996.

Therefore, by criticising Shahabuddin Ahmed AL has failed to abide by their own law.

We must also say that AL has left little or no room for the President to deliver his own opinion in the inaugural speech.

AL has also made serious accusation against the USA, India and

Rushmilla Chowdhury, o/e-mail

Political residuals

Political residuals take time to dissolve, and the leftovers irritate the society.

The citizens and the politicians are both unhappy, and the tolerance level goes down.

Our problem is weak politics, not the economy. A nation, small in area, and rich in human resources should not have insurmountable economic and fiscal problems, especially in a compact, homogeneous society.

But we are voluble and passionate, thereby delaying the rate of output. This defrayed-action performance piles up, and creates frustration and pessimism.

If the recent general elections convey a signal of change, the coming years are likely to be brighter.

A Mawaz
Dhaka

Telecom industry of Bangladesh

The telecom report of Bangladesh is really interesting. In 1996, I used to pay at least \$1.25/min to call Dhaka from Dallas, now I pay no more than 10 cents, which is almost the same as the nation-wide call in USA.

During 1996, 1997 we used long distance connection with some telecom companies like AT&T, Sprint, but since they have to pay the tax to different countries, they sell their minutes to some phone card companies.

The phone card companies fix the price with corrupt telephone

Response to the US Ambassador



The US is indiscriminately killing innocent civilians in Afghanistan regardless of the nature of the campaign that they try to portray in front of the world community. My question to the Ambassador Ms. Marry Ann Peters is, why is the US so zealous to oust the Taliban after five years of rule of Afghanistan by the Taliban regime? Where was the US since 1988 when the Russian army left Afghanistan?

The US says loudly that they are not at war with the Islam, but I do not see any acts or deeds to back this statement. So far in the US, law enforcement agency has detained eleven hundred people, and interestingly enough, all of them are of Islamic origin. In most of these cases, the defendants are in a dark without any charge filed against them; like the Japanese-Americans during WW II. "This war is not against Islam" - is just rhetoric to legitimise the US attack on innocent Afghan people. The US has almost legitimised this act of terror without providing any proof of September 11. I wonder what happened to the western justice system of "innocent, until proven guilty"?

According to President Bush, he wants to wage a war for fifty years to eradicate terrorism. Isn't it a height of insanity to wage a war for fifty years against one of the poorest nations on the earth? Then the legitimate question would be who is President Bush at war with and what are his absolute targets? I certainly hope that the target is not Islam.

The US also claimed that they have provided \$320 million worth of food and goods to Afghan people. The US has bombed the food storage site twice to destroy all the stored foods and then provide the foods and medical supplies to Afghans to make the US look good, specially in the eyes of the Muslim nations. The US paradigm of truth can be best seen in the daily press briefing of Mr. Rumsfeld. He tells the first journalist that there is no independent media coverage to verify Taliban claim of killing the US armies and then tells the second journalist that the Taliban have stolen entire warehouse of food stores. The U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld claimed the killing of innocent civilians as collateral damages. And the unknown terrorists claimed that their sole cause of this attack was to inflict a wound to the US economy and to stop the US prerogative attitude towards Israel against Palestinians; those 4800 people who were killed in this process according to the attackers are nothing but collateral damage.

Nasim Islam
Test/product Engineer
Salinas, Ca, *o/e-mail*

The BNP's recent tie-up with the openly pro-Taliban Jamaat-e-Islami, a party of radical Islamic clerics, has made the situation worse for Hindus. The Jamaat opposed Bangladesh's birth, see Pakistan as their ideological icon and has hatred for India, an overwhelmingly Hindu-majority country that has been manifested through sporadic acts of violence against the Bangladeshi Hindus.

Bengalis are the only people in the world who created a separate nation because they wanted to preserve their language and culture. "We are a nation of Bengali people," were the lofty pronouncements after independence. How things have changed since!

Atrath Aich
Toronto, Canada, *o/e-mail*

Oppression on the minorities

Being born as a minority is a curse yet in this modern world and if that is defined in religious term then it is worst of all. Bangladesh has always shown comparatively better religious harmony than in many countries in the world. Though there is no reason to take pride as long as single incident take place and as long as minority people grow up in a constant fear.

The best gift a nation can provide to a child is to let him grow without fear of any form. I believe

These individuals opposed the liberation of Bangladesh and now they are our ministers.

For people like Mr. Shuvo (who wrote in response to Mr. Haq), it may just be a "bickering of the past", but for millions of us, it is a very important part of our history, it is a matter of our prestige, pride, our heritage, and above all, our honour as a nation. Mr. Shuvo has mentioned that those two ministers "bear respect for the independence of Bangladesh". Even if it is true, is that enough to wipe out their misdeeds? To the best of my knowledge, they never apologised to the people of Bangladesh for their heinous role during the liberation movement of Bangladesh and their support for the atrocities perpetuated by the Pakistani forces in the sacred soil of Bangladesh. If they prevailed in their efforts, there would be no Bangladesh today and many of us would not have survived, and those valiant freedom fighters, who gave lives for this nation, would have been dubbed as "miscreants" and "terrorists" by Pakistan and by these ministers.

Sukesh
College Station, TX, USA, *o/e-mail*

Religious issues

A few days ago, a church in Bandarban has been attacked, looted and the Christians there have been beaten up. In Mymensingh, a Christian organisation helping people from different religions has been receiving threats and some Christians has been going through hardship and intimidation, not only in those area but in different other places as well as in Dhaka, this without mentioning the recent attacks on the Hindu community. The shocking part of the story is that yet no action has been taken against the offenders,

agree with him. When I was in Bangladesh, I remember seeing an interview by Nizami where he mentioned about the righteousness of his action under the circumstances of 1971. Mr. Kamal forgot to mention one more thing, which we should also be ashamed of i.e., the recent attack on the minorities by BNP. Both AL and BNP attacked on the minorities depending on the interests. But it is beyond my imagination how a caretaker government allowed such a thing to happen. I think if after these incidents, the minorities decide to be alienated from Bangladesh society, we should not blame them nor if they seek a safe place elsewhere.

Sukesh
College Station, TX, USA, *o/e-mail*

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"Harrowing tales of depravity"

Until today I was very excited about coming back home and starting a new job, new family and new life in Bangladesh. But I just read your "Harrowing tales of depravity" and I am almost in tears.

I do not know if I am angry, sad, scared or just plain confused. I just don't know how to react to this. I am not too sure about coming back either. I am a Muslim but my heart cries out for all those Hindu women who had their 'nakful' taken away from them.

And it is not about being a Hindu or a Muslim, because none of those religions justify the violation of innocent women and children. What assurance do I have that the Hindus would not retaliate in the same way against me or other fellow Muslims? How will I protect myself or my family from that?

How will I protect my roots, which are still in the rural areas? How will I explain such atrocious behaviour to my children? It does not make sense.

But you know what, I will probably just write this letter and do nothing more about it. But you on the other hand have taken a stand. You have made the effort to create a roving team. Rather you and your paper have made the effort to unearth the truth.

I hope the way the article has moved me, it will move some other people too and together we will make a difference. Keep up the good work.

My own research has led me to believe that the greatest mistake the Pakistanis made was that they violated our women. You have done the same mistake and will earn the wrath of it in due time. You have no idea how powerful women can be when they want to.

Just another woman, o/e-mail

I shudder to think what ghastly, inhuman tortures have been perpetrated (and are still being) on the citizens of our minority community right after the election!

It's a stark reminder of the Auschwitz holocaust during the 2nd World War. It's a shame on our part to call us a civilised country of the 21st century!

The new Home Minister probably doesn't have time to read the newspapers or watch international news channels to know as to what is happening right around him.

I thank *The Daily Star* profusely for sending an Investigating Team to Bhola, where the most heinous form of atrocities took place. We are a perennially begging country with a poor image and it is high time our Government realised what is good for the nation and what needs to be done to stop these beasts who unleashed such inhuman torture on our minority brothers and sisters.

Remember, if you are too late to respond to such sensitive situation even after fully realising its gravity, you might end up paying too high a price too soon! Punish the officials who played down the intensity of such tragic incidents and immediately bring to book the beasts who were behind these and root them out. Hang them if needed.

Shah Mushtaque Ahmed
Lake Circus, Dhaka *o/e-mail*

I was shocked and terrified to read about the mass looting and raping of a defenceless Hindu population on October 2 in the Bhola area. I am more shocked by the 'reaction', if any, of our law and order body, i.e. police, and MP's.

For what appears to be a daring and honest report of chilling atrocities committed by us against us I have to give thanks to *The Daily Star* team.

From the report, it is clear that the authority is in no hurry to do anything against the pests and vermin of our society that had the audacity to rape two hundred women including eight nine year old girls, and mothers in front of their sons and daughters!

They were found saying that nobody lodged any formal complaint! What kind of ridiculous statement is that?

The people who are scared to death, who pays protection money just to stay in their own homes, how do we expect them to come forward and "lodge complaints"?

If we have any right to call us human beings, we should come forward, and prosecute those who have done this.

I would request the newly elected government to consider this with utmost seriousness, because the primary purpose of having a government is safety and security of the people.

Otherwise, we might as well do away with it, and live in the Sundarbans (whatever is left of it)!

Enam Ahmed Chowdhury
USA, *o/e-mail*

"Is CNN irrelevant?"



Here is my reply to the letter "Is CNN Irrelevant?" (November 10).

I agree with your observations on the role of CNN. Unfortunately, this malaise is not confined to CNN; it extends in general throughout the US media. In fact CNN is generally less biased and has a broader coverage than other mainstream US media outlets.

We are dismayed by the superficiality and utter lack of seeking "the story behind the events." CNN seems to simply parrot official pronouncements from governments while doing little or no investigation into the background or causes of events and providing no analysis or context of its reporting. While CNN had never been "brave" in the past, at present it seems to have been completely muzzled due to wartime censorship.

To see the extent of CNN's shallowness, one just needs to look at media outlets from the UK. Though the British have the same cultural and social values as the US, the reporting in the UK is like a breath of fresh air to a suffocating person compared to the US media. A case in point is the reporting of the UK newspaper "The Guardian."

On covering an Israeli siege of a Palestinian town, the Guardian (reporting surprisingly from a Jewish correspondent) talks about Israeli "brutality" in demolishing Palestinian homes, killing of Palestinian police officers (not accused of any crime even by Israel) in a surprise attack, internment of wounded Palestinians in a nearby illegal Jewish settlement without medical assistance and preventing ambulances from evacuating the wounded. In covering the same event what does CNN say? In its very sterile monotone, it quotes Israeli Army sources of an operation to eliminate terrorists and says there were Palestinian "claims" that ambulances were not allowed through.

Thus, even judging by the UK standards it appears that there is a well planned strategy in the US media of deliberately keeping the public uninformed of actual happenings in the Middle East in order to keep public opinion firmly biased against the Palestinians and against the seeking of justice.

Khalid Islam, o/e-mail

ment has resulted in the local sector but ironically has provided employment to foreign nationals.

This government has been given the mandate to reform our ailing economy and restore law and order. Hope they will try their best in ruling the country.

Z. Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka, *o/e-mail*

Bangladesh Shilpa Bank

Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) was established for financing the medium and large industries in the

other countries alleging of helping the 4-party alliance to win the election.

On the contrary, AL has always shown keen interest in maintaining good relationship with the USA and hailed the visit of Bill Clinton as a success of its own.

If according to the AL chief, the voters' decision was robbed by the foreign powers, as the party did not agree to sell gas, then we advise the AL chief to provide authentic evidence to support such accusations.

Riffat Siddiqui &

officials of Bangladesh and bypass the tax, which cost the country millions of dollars. That's how it works.

Well, on Bangladesh perspective, corruption is not something new. Bangladeshis in the USA always talk about the corruption in our country, but unfortunately we are committing this sin daily by using phone cards.

Mohammad Khan
University of North Texas, *o/e-mail*

I have no words to express my anger and sadness after going through the harrowing details of the reports of atrocities on minorities in Bhola ("Harrowing tales of depravity", November 09).

Why on earth is the government sitting idle and making lifeless remarks after knowing the grave details of oppression and tyranny against humanity.

The Prime Minister went to Mecca to thank Allah for giving her the opportunity to govern the country. But she also must know that she would be held responsible for the welfare of the people of this country.

The tears of the oppressed reach Allah very quickly and if no action is taken to stop these heinous acts, punish the perpetrators and safeguard the minorities, Allah is enough to provide justice in the appropriate manner.

And for the Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic organisations: you are very active to champion Allah's cause and are also hyper-active to take to streets to protest any wrongdoing and action that goes against Islamic belief and sentiments.

Now how come you're so silent when oppression is carried out in an open and arrogant manner against the creations of Allah? Your incessant call to Islam while grossly neglecting the rightful duty towards others is only helping to qualify a truly great religion and is keeping general people away from you.

Raqibul Mostafa
Virgini Tech, *o/e-mail*