

**Oppressed minority**  
I want to thank P. Chowdhury for his opinion "Alien in Homeland" (October 19). I think his opinion is really praiseworthy and courageous. He has described the real condition of Bangladeshi Hindu community. I also want to thank *The Daily Star*, which has published regularly the oppression on the minority after the October election.

**S. Roy**  
Dhaka

**"Harrowing tales of depravity"**

Mr. Ashfaq A. Chowdhury, (who wrote the letter "Harrowing tales of depravity", 14.11.01)

I just have one thing to ask you, would you write the same letter if somebody who was dear to you lost their "Nakphul"? Learn to empathise with people— it will make you successful in life.

And as for the so-called "ammunition to the opposition" is concerned; nobody deserves to live in peace when even one man in society is deprived of his/her rights.

If you are talking about maintaining the status-quo for the betterment of the major section of people and thus living in a society where only the fittest survives, perishing the weak; it will not happen in this country. People like you who "brush dirt under the carpet" don't have the "stomach" it takes to stand a chance in this world let alone live in it bravely.

Cheers to *The Daily Star* for having the "stomach".

**Ali Bhuiyan**, on e-mail

**Protect the minorities, please**

On request of a friend, my family and me went to attend "Durga Puja" festival in Los Angeles, USA. Dakshini Bengali Association of California arranged the grand show.

On the second day the main attraction was a musical show by famous "Aarati Mukherjee." While we were waiting for the grand musical finale, all of a sudden Dr. Chanchal Chatterjee of Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (HRCBM) picked-up the microphone and made an appeal. He read a press release which says that, nearly 200,000 Hindu and other religious minorities in Bangladesh are terrorised by the Bangladesh government and the fundamentalist, the whole press release may be seen at <http://www.hrcbm.org>.

Dr. Chatterjee requested all present at the function to sign the appeal which will be sent to the Secretary General of United Nations. I observed that a huge number of audience signed the document. Though I remained there till the music program came to an end, but was completely down as a Bangladeshi.

Needless to say that our beloved Bangladesh does not have a good image in the foreign country. It is known as a corrupt country, poverty stricken nation, land of natural calamities etc.

I request the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to take immediate action against the perpetrators and regain the image of Bangladesh "as a peaceful nation of communal harmony."

**Kh. S. Omar Faruk**  
San Dimas, California, USA

**They are not minorities but citizens**

It is mind-boggling that, while fellow citizens are going through hell, we are busy debating the fate of Afghanistan and the so-called injustices being imposed upon its citizens by others. Where as the latter is a debatable issue, the atrocities committed on minorities in Bangladesh cannot be justified in any manner whatsoever.

It is outrageously sad that Mr. Anup Deb from Texas, who I believe has affected relative and friends in Bhola, felt obliged to write this angry yet sad letter. Every Bangladeshi citizen should share his anger and sadness. There can be no arguable rational by anyone for infringing upon the safety and basic human rights of innocent citizens. Neither the Constitution nor religion can be used to justify or condone such deplorable acts.

Every government is expected to ensure the safety of all its citizens. There can be no valid excuse on the part of any government for failing to take swift corrective actions in such matters. A society cannot claim to be truly civilised if it blatantly ignores such fundamental rights of its members. If we look at the world, this fact should be crystal clear.

**Didarul Islam**  
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, U.S.A

**Be stricter**

I would like to congratulate the new government for the actions it is taking against corrupt ex-MPs and their associated criminals.

However, I would like to remind the Prime Minister that to achieve the goal, those responsible for recent attacks on the Hindu community must also be swiftly arrested and punished.

**Zeeshan Hasan**, on e-mail

**New VC episode**

I feel disgraced to read the news regarding the take over incidents of the new VC's of the two important

universities, Dhaka and Jahangirnagar. If the VC's and university teachers are engaged in party politics, then what can the nation expect from them other than terrorism, session jam, rape and murder?

The university teachers and VC's depend on their militant partisan students to stay in power and office. That is the reason why the highest institutions are failing to produce to contribute for the development of our country.

**To the average American**

Yes you are the average American ("Who we are, and what we stand for!" November 14) who sends weapons to third-world countries so that they can organise their foolish dispute and buy your weapons booming your weapon trade. You are the guy who drops hordes of bomb to kill thousands of innocent people in Iraq.

You are the guy who arms Israel so that they can kill the helpless Palestinians. You are the guy who dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. You are the guy who killed millions of Iraqi children by mounting inhumane sanctions on Iraq. You are the guy who created Osama-bin-Laden. You are the guy who did not utter a word of protest during the five-year Harrowing Taliban rule but negotiated with them for their oil.

You are the guy who does not touch your natural resources but forces third-world countries to sell theirs. You are the guy who invests astronomical sum for improving his nuclear arsenal and on the other hand put other countries under pressure to sign CTBT. You are the guy who contributes too much for the perforated ozone layer and asks third-world countries to stop industrialisation. You are the guy who in 1974 asked ships on their way not to sail for Chittagong while people were dying from starvation.

You are the guy who do not know the history and do not want to know the truth lest you incriminate yourself. You are the guy who bombs Red Cross warehouses so that they crave for your aids. You are the guy who digs ditches but you are also the guy who creates companies like Monsanto. And when my neighbours threaten me you are the guy who at first solves his equation. That's why you hated us after liberation. You are the guy who destroys colossal amount of food to gear up the market price but does not send it to starving countries. You are the guy who created Islamic Extremists to fight communism.

You weep for your fellow Americans but you were indifferent when millions of children died from shortage of medicine in Iraq. You weep for 244 airline passengers but you were not when the USA gunned down an Iraqi commuter plane. You weep for the innocence destroyed because it is America but you do not weep for the same when it is NOT America. You are the guy who thinks that his tears are costlier than those of the other's are. But soon you will weep no more. You will oil your weapons so that you can kill the innocents again who are 'collateral damage' to you. You will note sycophancy and you will deny aid if they come from sympathisers of Palestinians. You will also note who are not sycophants and see them afterwards (God knows you are good at that).

And you will remember that you are an American because you are resourceful and you are vindictive. You forget when you are the killer but you never forget when you get killed. Sleep well America while the world weeps.

**Durdana Ghias**  
Department of Economics, DU

As a parent, may I please request our learned VC's and teachers to behave?

**Sabah Muhammad**  
Baeshwar, Sylhet

**We shall face the same fate**

When Mr. Saifur Rahman warns that, his party shall meet the same fate as the Awami League did unless the government is able to stop terrorism, his comments are not only significant but also raises some questions in our mind. Many staunch supporters of BNP are disappointed at the of the deteriorating law and order situation. What is most discouraging is that, almost all such crimes are committed directly or indirectly by party people.

But the Finance Minister does not have a magic wand to improve the situation overnight. He needs co-operation and co-ordination of at least half-a-dozen important ministers including the Prime Minister and the entire business community. The general people want to see the situation improved so that they can live in peace.

**Rumi Ahmed**  
Katalganj, Chittagong

**Government austerity**

The newly inducted government has taken some urgent steps to save the falling economy. Many other economic measures are needed now, especially in view of the coming recession and the very weak economy of Bangladesh depending on a few vulnerable sources of export earnings.

All wasteful revenue expenditure needs trimming. Many of the development projects have a personal agenda. The interest structures are still one of the highest in the world discouraging industrial growth, and a competitive export potential. The government austerity at all levels, is an urgent need of the hour.

**Shahabuddin Mahtab**  
Siddheswari, Dhaka

**Age limit for govt. job**

Recently, I have come across a news report regarding the Reform Commission's recommendation for the increase in retirement age from 57 to 58, or 60 in some cases. It's difficult to understand how the Commission could make such recommendation in a poor country like Bangladesh where there are a large number of unemployed youths.

Under special requirements this may be done at the secretarial level and such posts but why this should be done for all posts starting from those of the clerks and peons is beyond my understanding.

Due to session jam and like, most of the youth of this country reach the age of about 29 by the time they graduate. Then the search for a job takes away a couple of years more.

I appeal to the Prime Minister to look into the matter and consider it in the perspective of the greater interest of the country and not increase the retirement age for government employees. Instead the age limit for entry in the government jobs should be increased to 32 years or more which will help the meritorious students to a great extent.

**Md Minhajuddin**  
Nayatola, Maghbazar, Dhaka

**EUCSU election**

I found the 6<sup>th</sup> of November EUCSU Election to be a laboratory model of the national election. The candidates spent at least taka 5000 for posters. And the big party nominees offered Chinese food to voters. Soft drinks were free for all in the cafeteria the day before the election. Not to mention where this money comes from.

Why is it like this? We are the so-called brilliant students of Bangladesh but acting like corrupt politicians.

**AF Rahman**  
Dhaka

**Ban 3-wheelers**

I am writing this mail with bag full of disappointment by the activities of our past and present government. We deal with lots of problem in our country as well as city life, and among them is the poisonous smoke emitted from the 3-wheelers. The situation is worsening day by day. Though a lot of promises have been made but none were effective.

We vote for government to enjoy our citizens' betterment but much to the dismay of our wish all turn round. Children are in more danger than we are and it is so poisonous that once you have coughing and sneezing problem it tends to stay for months or so.

My humble request to the concerned ones please take proper steps and help us live a bit longer. Government comes and government goes but the smokes stay forever.

**Badal Hasib**  
Mohammedpur Dhaka

**Withdrawal of corruption cases**

A few days earlier there was a front-page news report in your daily on the withdrawal of corruption cases against the BNP ministers and lawmakers. Under the same headline there was a report that new corruption cases are being framed against the AL ministers and lawmakers. We were not only surprised but also astonished to see such actions. In general terms, we know that only the court can dismiss or dispose of cases. How will the public know whether there were any merits or not in those cases?

The same investigative instruments are now investigating corruption cases against the AL leaders as they did in the cases of BNP. Surely, when BNP is gone and AL comes in their cases of corruption would be withdrawn and new ones would be framed against the BNP leaders.

**PEG**, on e-mail

**Congratulations new Grandmaster**

Congratulations to Ziaur Rahman--the second Grandmaster of Bangladesh. I hardly know how to play chess. Despite that I always followed this game closely. Hopefully this will be the start of a new era for Bangladesh chess and for Ziaur Rahman.

**Mir Tanvir Hasan**  
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, USA

**Develop second-hand PC market**

Now used-car market has estab-

**Further reverse psychology**

What would the people of Bangladesh have done if three planes carrying Indian citizens some of whom were already known to be belonging to anti-Bangladesh or anti-Islam organisations hijacked four planes and crashed them into, say, downtown Dhaka. And through this act they levelled the Parliament building, the tomb of Pari Bibi or a couple of large office buildings, killing upwards of 4500 people and risking the lives of close to 100,000.

Suppose these hijackers had been trained in India controlled Kashmir, in camps already known to the Dhaka government of training anti-Bangladesh terrorist. If the main financier of these camps lived in impunity in India controlled Kashmir and was already indicted in both the UN and Bangladesh for previous terrorist attacks on Bangladesh's embassies abroad. And if the Bangladesh government had further evidence that this person or persons in Kashmir was behind the attacks and shared that evidence with countries that were India's allies. The allies then came to the same conclusion but still Kashmir and India not only refused to hand the man over, but failed to even arrest him and confined him in their own country, even though the man had said again and again it was his sworn duty to kill Bangladesh's citizens. What do you honestly think Bangladesh would do? Go to the Hague? Go to the UN and get another indictment? Or form an alliance with Pakistan, Afghanistan and any and all countries it could get to climb on board, isolate India, give them an ultimatum and when it became clear that, once again, no co-operation was forthcoming, commence the most effective military action they could muster?

I make no claims that America is without guilt in the world. We can be overbearing, short-sighted. We act, like every other nation, in our own self-interest far too often. But those who try to justify the New York commando attacks, which is what they were, by US foreign policy blunders, are kidding themselves. And are asking the US to meet a standard no country would meet. If Bangladesh would act how those opposed to action in Afghanistan pretend they want the US to act, it would soon fail to be a sovereign nation.

**Scott Kraft**  
California, USA

**Balloon Bangladesh Airline**

On November 14, CNN online survey showed that 39 per cent of American would rethink about flying (by aeroplane). And my personal survey shows that all of my American colleagues think

lished itself, as more and more new cars are being sold. The local PC (personal computer) industry may set-up a network of used-computers-for-sale, for perpetration of PC into the middle class family and students. Proper regulations may be promulgated for ensuring guaranteed after-sales service. The initiative has to come from the top. The govt-controlled computer society cannot make its presence felt. It is more than paper work (for

I do not find any wrong doing, as they are 'capturing' (or correctly said 'winning over' the places of interest, which had so long been occupied forcibly by the opponents. And this is the natural phenomenon of any kind of changeovers. Why make this a big news item, an unnecessary noise and make a mountain out of a molehill! Let there be objective news and news on nation building and those with national interest so that we could be more knowledgeable and worthy citizens.

**AF Rahman**  
Dhaka

**What a coincidence!**

In 1971, the West Pakistani army and their henchmen murdered Bengali civilians and raped Bengali women. This was the punishment for the way the Bengalis had voted. Later the Hamoodur Rahman Commission report would claim that "only" 26,000 Bengalis had died. The report does not even mention rapes, and claims that an insignificant number of such cases might have occurred.

Thirty years later, Bangladeshi Hindus are murdered and Hindu women are raped in independent secular Bangladesh. Their houses are looted, their places of worship ransacked. This time also the victims are being punished, based on the perception that they had voted for the Awami League. The local authorities do nothing to protect the minority community.

The then President of Pakistan fled East Pakistan on the night of March 26, and did not even pretend to be curious about what his men were doing to his fellow citizens. This time, the world still waits weeks after the incidents, to hear from the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, who happens to be a woman!

**Sumit Mazumdar**  
Professor of Physics and Optical Sciences  
University of Arizona, on e-mail

**Shrimp cultivation**

We in the international community welcome your government and join you in the efforts to improve people's lives in Bangladesh. The change in government brings us hope for changes in the lives especially of those who are heavily impacted by *bagda* farming projects in your country.

We at the Industrial Shrimp Action Network (ISA Net) trust that Her Excellency will use her office to

morning timing are suffering awfully. I went to a government bank at three p.m. and I was told the bank was closed though the closing time was four p.m. but they don't care about the legitimate timing and their behaviour is rough. I don't know how many people are there suffering like me but I think that was a menacing signal of things to come and it should be stopped with strict hands. Otherwise it will worsen to a state that will have no way to come back. I am not asking the government to

VIPs, they have value for time which we don't.

Like all other inhabitants, my question is: is there no possible way to do these repair works during nights or on holidays when there are lesser traffic movements?

**Anjali Akbar**  
Azimpur Road, Dhaka

**Weekly holiday**

Afghan Airlines is the safest airline to travel. Unfortunately, Afghan Air officially went out of business last week. This is the prime time to think different about flying as well as to start a multi billion-dollar business and I hope Bangladesh Biman will take it seriously.

**Pir Saheb**  
45 Kirkwood Dr.  
NY, USA

**The US envoy's response**

I must say, I was most disappointed to read the US envoy's response to *The Daily Star* editorial. The response seemed nothing more than the reshaped press releases we have been inundated with courtesy of the inane CNN.

First of all, she claims that the pilots are at risk. From what? Where is the anti aircraft fire coming from? Then there is the question of military targets. From the news footage we have seen, these "targets" comprise of nothing else but a few shacks in the middle of the desert. So the question arises, how many times does a pilot have to hit the same shack and the desert patch in front of it? And then, are the military targets placed so close to one another, that carpet-bombing using cluster bomb is justified?

The US has repeatedly claimed that news sources are sketchy. If that were true, how does Her Excellency know that the Taliban are distorting the news? How does she know that the food packets have been contaminated? In the news we hear now that the colour of the food packets matches that of the cluster bombs, and the US is now exploring ways of getting that message to the refugees. So who is poisoning what?

In her letter she states that the coalition is focusing on the terrorist network and its supporters. If there is proof that the network is indeed there, and is identifiable, then why drop bombs? Why not send in the troops to destroy the network? If the bombing was so precise, why are there refugees? Why was the same Red Cross warehouse hit three times?

In the United States, a person is supposedly considered innocent until proven guilty. Of course, in the light of the events of the past several months, it has become obvious that this tenet applies to the white majority only. Over 600 Muslims and "Middle Eastern looking" men (whatever that means) have been detained without a trial. Many Middle Eastern looking people have been taken off aircraft without any explanation. The lives of these people have been ruined forever, whether they are proven innocent or not.

Turning the minority groups (who do not have Caucasian features and skin color) into scapegoats is nothing new. The internment of Americans of Japanese descent during the Second World War is a very good example. We don't hear about the internment of Americans of German or Polish descent during the same time. Can we forget the civil right movements of the 1970's and the assassination of Martin Luther King?

In 1991, after the Desert Storm campaign, when Gen Colin Powell

ensure the development of sustainable alternatives to export-oriented saline water shrimp farming that would support the needs of local population and curb the destruction of the country's world-famous Sundarbans.

ISA Net is a global network of leading non-government and environmental organisations working to address the social and environmental impacts of shrimp farming. We are mindful of the potentialities existing in Bangladesh and would like very much to work in tangent with your government in developing these alternatives. We are very concerned about how shrimp farming is putting your country's mangrove forests in a very vulnerable situation. We are also concerned about the expansion of shrimp farms and the human rights situation in Khulna. We urge you to please not bow to the demands of the industry for more subsidies, use all your power to realise alternative programs being developed on the ground.

We and our esteemed member in Bangladesh are looking forward to working with you on this.

**Isabel de la Torr**International Coordinator

**The banks**

The recent banking time has effected us terribly and eventually the government banks are closed after the lunch time and people like us who work cannot be there at the

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The then President of Pakistan fled East Pakistan on the night of March 26, and did not even pretend to be curious about what his men were doing to his fellow citizens. This time, the world still waits weeks after the incidents, to hear from the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, who happens to be a woman!

If there is a difference it is simply this. The average West Pakistani could have honestly claimed in 1971 that they were not aware of what was going on in East Pakistan/Bangladesh--the West Pakistani newspapers simply did not publish about these atrocities until much later. It pains me to write this. I write this not as an Indian, not as a person who was raised a Hindu, but simply as another Bengali who had always considered Bangladeshis as friends.

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Professor of Physics and Optical Sciences  
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**Weekly holiday**

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Travelling by balloon may not be as fast as aeroplane but it surely has advantages over road. From the US Civil War, through World Wars I and II balloons are used as tools for warfare, for transportation surveying and communication. Balloon gives you the real taste of flying-- "I believe I can touch the sky". No airport necessary, it can land on your backyard. There are lot more about ballooning.

You might be laughing but I don't mind giving it a shot!

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