TOTHEREDITOR

"Harrowing tales of depravity"



Shops, belonging to Hindus, ransacked and gutted at a village near Char Fashion.

I cannot even articulate into words the grave sadness and pity that I felt in reading the articles "Harrowing tales of depravity". I did not feel anger, as some I know did, because in committing and ignoring these acts as the government of Bangladesh has done, they have lost not only the innocence of an entire generation, but also the respect and loyalty of anyone with a shred of conscience and decency

As a young woman, who once had Bangladeshi roots--that I have now renounced forever--I am embittered by the lack of action on the part of the Bangladeshi government to prevent or attempt to control these heinous crimes. Never again I will call myself a Bangladeshi, Never again I will think of it as a relative figment of a

homeland. I have been an American all my life, but have held Bangladesh in close regard. It is the birthplace of my ancestors, and shamefully the birthplace of the monsters who had the audacity and inhumanity to rape a child.

One can be rest assured that not only will I wouldn't set foot on its soil again until these fiends are brought to justice but I will not pass on this harrowing legacy to my future progeny. They will not be brought up with any regard for a country that condones rape and pillage of women. I am disgusted by both the actions of the monsters who would commit such a sin, and the government who has turned a blind eye, a deaf ear, and a cold heart.

I hope that they are all haunted by the screams of terror of women being stripped of their dignity, innocence, and souls. But I also have faith that, eventually, the perpetrators of these crimes will be brought to justice. Just because one government sits idly by as its citizens are tortured, does not mean that the rest of the world will. There will be an uprising against these heinous crimes, and justice will be served. I only hope that it will not come too late. There is simply too much at stake.

Young Ex-Bangladeshi, on e-mail

I must congratulate The Daly Star's Roving Team and their courageous editor for projecting the harrowing tales of the deprived. This was indeed timely and you have done a professional job. You have done a great service to the humanity. I hope you will continue to dig more of these events of human rights violation.

The tales which you have told are good enough for an in depth nvestigation by the Human Rights Commission. Where are our human rights activists? Why are they silent about this? Do they think raping of two hundred women including nine children in an open paddy field in a village in Bhola by the goons of the of the 'victorious' parties not enough an evidence for lodging a case with

when the very moral basis of our society has been so blatantly

Why is every articulate ambassador of the so-called civilised countries so quiet now? They have been very quick in finding the election as exceptionally 'fair' and yet do not want to probe why the victorious are behaving like vanquished? Why can't they point fingers at the rapists and those who nurture them? Why can't they look into the election result centre by centre of about a hundred high profile constituencies where the AL got second position and find out for themselves the nature of the rigging?

God will not spare those who are indulging crime against humanity. The harrowing tales you printed can only match those of 1971 or the ones in Ruanda or Kosova. I curse both the caretaker and the present government. They all will have to pay a heavy price for allowing the goons to violate my 'child's' honour. Again many thanks to *The Daily Star* Roving Team for unearthing the truth which the Home Minister wanted to hide.

I am an expatriate and a supporter of the BNP, (a choice of the lesser evil). However, I am disgusted, outraged and ashamed of what is going on in the country.

One of the main reasons why Bangladesh was created because we, unlike our Pakistani masters, were people who regardless of their religion regarded the fellow countrymen as brothers and

How could we ignore this sacred and unique quality and watch BNP and its alliance kill and rape our fellow countrymen and women only because they are of different religion. How dare the BNP and its alliance insult the spirit of our nation and insult the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for this unique and

the HRC? How could these people talk about poverty eradication sacred ideal? How dare these perpetrators taint my country and me with their social, religious and political bigotry?

Such a crime must not go unpunished. The political sponsors must not go unpunished. And most of all the law enforcement agencies who stood by as mere spectators whilst these atrocities were committed must not go unpunished. No one with any dignity or humanity can remain silent whilst such barbarism continues to go on. It is up to all of us to stand up and ensure that these types of crimes do not escape justice or are repeated in our sacred mother-

Mahboob Hoque Dubai, UAE



A place of worship for Hindus at a village called No 7 West Char Umed not spared either.

Response to the **US** envoy

The US envoy has tried to absolve her country of the charge of bombing and killing Afghan innocent civilians by blaming the Taliban for all the acts of terrorism. But according to western media reports, innocent lives have indeed been lost in Afghanistan by the American air strikes. Is the US envoy trying to hoodwink the people of Bangladesh by denying the reports of BBC and CNN?

The US envoy has mentioned about the aid her country is providing in Afghanistan. But is all the aid, that the US could possibly muster, as valuable as one single innocent life? God (Allah) has given life to his creations. No wealth in the whole wide world is as valuable as life given by God almighty. Because no one can give it back after taking it. The US government affirms "in God we trust". Yet its deeds fall short of the high moral values it professes.

Kazi Saifuddin Hossain President, Islamic Propagation Center Bangladesh, Dhaka

Guilty until proven

innocent! This is in response to Sajjad Hussain's letter 'Grateful Americans' (November 11) condemning those Bangladeshis who are in a race to proclaim their allegiance and support to the unjustified brutalities of the US government in an effort to distance themselves from the Taliban. I agree with the writer unequivocally. I also sometimes wonder are these people being honest to themselves? I understand their desperation. They are trying to cover their back, what else can they do? Do they have any choice? As the Quotation of the Millennium goes: You are with us (Uncle Sam & Co.) or you are with them (the 'terrorists'). So Mr. Hussain, please

With the continuing recession, big companies in the West have started announcing job cuts in thousands. Who will be the first casualties? The ones with Muslim names.

don't be so hard on them

Already more than eleven hundred Muslims have been detained for questioning in the US alone. Moreover they have just announced 5000 (Muslim) recent visitors to the US this year would be questioned in their cozy homelands for possible terrorist links.

A number of arrests have been made in Germany and other places by following a chain of e-mail addresses. The e-mail system providers in the US had to install software like an anti-virus macro to check for words that were offensive to Mr. Bush's ear. All e-mails are now checked regularly for words like OBL (Osama Bin Laden) or Al-Qaeda.

A number of Muslims have already been arrested on the basis of their phone conversation after the September 11 incident, for insufficient reasons like those who failed to express their sadness, for possible terrorist links. Does it mean all phones are perennially tapped? Is there no freedom of expression or speech in the Land of Liberty?

They have frozen thousands of bank accounts of the Muslims, also threatening to take punitive actions against Islamic Banks around the world because according to the US officials, they are all allegedly related to the 'terrorists.'

The US has successfully gagged the media. The Al-Jazeera television network, popularly known as the 'CNN of the Middle East' has been disciplined-- a US missile hit their office in Kabul recently.

The US leaders made it clear with the fall of Kabul that the "US war against terrorism is far from over.' This is just the beginning.

Now can you blame those 'grateful Americans' for their frenzy to pose as moderate Muslims?

No Muslim in this world is safe any more, moderates or radicals. For the time being the radicals may be the main targets, but soon the

moderates will be targeted in the next phase of Mr. Bush's 'crusade.' Now all Muslims are "guilty until proven innocent".

Shukla Mirza, on e-mail

"Who we are, and what we stand for!"

This in response to Mr. Rouchell's letter (November 14). First of all Mr. Rouchell, no one ever espoused hatred towards the USA. All the letters were critical about the US policy. May be your personal intolerideas are. You did not even wait for the facts. Before you lace your boots and oil your guns, learn about the world, other cultures. They are as peaceful as people in the USA. Learn to value people for their differences, respect each other and acknowledge the fact we all get benefited from each other. It is not a one way street.

M. Hassan Dallas, TX

"Cry for me, oh Bangladesh"

However, much of what he wrote is rather generalised.

born without any knowledge of the home country.

contribute to our country's foreign exchange reserves.

Thank you Mr. Rouchell for enlightening us with "Who we are, and

This is in response to Mr. Ahmad Jamali's letter "Cry for me, oh Bangladesh" (November 14). In the

letter he addresses various issues ranging from Bangladesh's fanatical mindset, to terrorism, to

Bin Laden, to communal violence, to Islam, to the nation's independence-- just about everything.

Firstly, regarding Bin Laden, there has been no Pro-Laden demonstration here in Bangladesh in

any way matching the intensity and magnitude of those in other Islamic countries, like Pakistan or

Indonesia. This is because we are moderate and tolerant in nature, virtues that have so far man-

aged to check the menace of fundamentalism in what is the second largest Muslim country in the

world. That too, amidst widespread poverty, corruption, overpopulation, inequality, crime and

Regarding the issue of recent communal violence in Bangladesh, I can only say that these are

isolated incidents and by no means do they represent the general mindset or the trend of the coun-

try. Historically, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and other communities have always lived side by side

in Bangladesh and have never engaged in conflict barring some isolated exceptions, purely politi-

he says we don't condemn every act of violence or terrorism strongly enough. Of course every one

of us condemn, in the strongest possible words, the events of September 11, no questions about

As you said, "our nation has more important issues to deal with", I couldn't agree more. Let us

start with the Bangladeshis living abroad, particularly in the US. In recent times, a foreign remit-

tance from the US has been dramatically reduced, primarily because our citizens are increasingly

earning and burning their money in America. Some, if not most, embrace American citizenship

proudly in search of a new identity, setting up a permanent home there, future generations being

are the days when good foreign currency was earned from such people through purchase of prop-

erty, remittance and business investments in our country. We have since become more "hi-tech"

and prefer to address our country's complex problems through a couple of e-mails originating from

plush offices or residences in some world famous metropolis. These days, only the poor, hand-to-

mouth blue-collar labourers, toiling away in some godforsaken factory in Malaysia or Saudi Arabia,

In fact many people sell valuable property in Bangladesh and conveniently transfer the money

I'm not saying this is a crime because everyone has the freedom of choice but one should

always pay one's debts. After all, the money and the resources for that quality education, that

quality way of life, which some of us so longingly yearn for, was earned from the blood, sweat and

tears of this deprived land. Let us not forget that. As you so proprietarily said, Mr. Jamali, Bin Laden

hasn't done anything for our country, too true, but neither have the Bangladeshis I mentioned

abroad, through 'hundi', coincidentally another of Bin Laden's preferred means of transaction.

Entire families willingly migrate, so no question of sending money to anyone back home. Gone

that. Islam is a peaceful religion, let us not integrate Bin Laden and Islam into one entity.

Regarding the issue of Islam being a peaceful religion I don't see what Mr. Jamali means when

cal in nature, created to reap maximum profits for certain specific quarters.

"Muslim" world had to pay for doing worse things than the US (whatever that means). When a Muslim kills a Muslim, many Muslims try to right the wrong, but obviously safely ensconced in your new homeland, you don't realise that. But of course the cluster bombs will set everything right, so why worry? Once this is over, the world will be as pristine as the first day of creation!

Yes, I agree that the Arabs call the foreigners working in their countries as beggars. But they only call the ones from Asia, not the westerners, or you didn't know that. We can't

ing the American opinion". Islam isn't about culture, it is about social equity for all the people of the world. So it's not a question of 'Muslim' or 'Bengali'. You can be both.

But more importantly we do have to be introspective and question the deficiencies plaguing our own culture for true reform to happen, instead of blaming the west all the time. That is what Islam would require of us.

If we really do value the secular humanist aspects of Islam we would question everybody if any abhorrent acts took place in our country or outside regardless of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity or nationality. So it's not about supporting the Americans or the Arabs, but a lot more than that.

Khurrum Siddique London, United Kingdom

We don't hate Americans but their policy

I am writing this letter to share my thoughts with the writer of "An American Opinion" (October 30). The writer is either misguided or ignorant of the underlying reasons why there is an apparent perception among many Americans that the whole world or most part of it-- hate the Americans.

Recently a visiting American scholar asked the audience this very question: Why do so many people in the world hate the Ameri-This is a misconception in the

Americans' minds. Hating American

foreign policy and hating America are two different things. It doesn't take one to be a foreign policy expert to see the sheer hypocrisy, inconsistency and con-

It is Americans who equipped Afghan Mujahids with arms and trained them, recruited ruthless fighters of the likes of Bin Laden. and trained the Talibans knowing fully well that Talibans and Mujahideens are fundamentalists in

tradictions in American foreign

belief. America invaded in Vietnam. defying American people's opinions. subjected American soldiers to the merciless killings in the hands of Vietnamese Guerrillas, killed thousands of Vietnamese for at least 12 years.

America took the side of Marcos of Philippines for the whole time he was in power knowing fully well that his regime was anti-people, took the side of Suharto who allegedly was involved in the killing of a popular President Dr Sukarno supported Pinochet and his mass killings of political opponents.

And the most glaring example of American anti-people and antihumanity policy is their foreign policy in the Middle East in general, and in Palestine-Israel conflict in particular

Other than its foreign policy, America is a great nation. Ordinary Americans are fantastic people. No one hates any American.

Its is the American policy on issues like democracy, peace, environment, trade, nonproliferation of nuclear arms, and people's right to self-determination that people criticise about. We all condemn the attacks of

September 11. There is no difference between killings of civilians in one place of the world and in

lives, i.e., and killings, of ordinary civilians in Afghanistan. The writer started the letter with

I will not get into the complex debate of the economics of foreign, but I just want to say that feeding the

whole world for the rest of our lives experts. does not entitle one with the right to The author suggested America being selfish. That shows how naive

trading with the rest of the world for even a day? In their best interest, America is rather the strongest voice for trade liberalisation the author doesn't know. If you want, please advise Mr Bush to take his hands off the whole world and the world would be a better place to live. A citizen, on e-mail

"I am ashamed"

Let me thank you for publishing the letter by K. Haq (October 30). It has brought to the fore the glaring fact that the nation is yet to receive an unconditional apology from the people who sided with Pak Army against their own countrymen in 1971. It is better late than never!

Don't we bleed in our hearts when those gruesome scenes of torture on the innocent men, women and children of the country flash back in our memory? Aren't we really ashamed?

Abdullahel Kafi Mohammadpur, Dhaka

RMG export to LDCs

Today the RMG sector is suffering due to non-diversification of the readymade garment export. One country was buying 40 per cent of our exports, and now we are in trouble after September 11.

Why is there no marginal market for export of clothes to the LDCs? All individuals and families have to buy clothes several times a year, for daily use. The garment factories are located in the developing countries due to cheaper labour and production costs. All under-developed

arrangements and other incentives. BGMEA may like to consider organising a debate on the issue.

A Citizen

Removal of VCs

It's absolutely unjust to replace six VCs and other university officials. While the VCs were elected by the senate and finally approved by the President cum Chancellor of universities, what right the government had to remove them undemocratically?

We usually see demand of removal of VCs by the student wings. If the government does the same bypassing the elected senates and syndicated then how would our students nurture due respect to their university administration?

If there are any allegations against any VC, there are laws of the land to bring them to justice. But the present act of the govern-

ment failed to show that they have minimum respect for the elected senates, syndicates as well as the charter of rights of a person mentioned in our Constitution. If such injustice goes on and the

civil society keeps silent, our students will get the chance to use pressure tactics on the newly selected VCs as well. Who has given the government the autocratic authority to disgrace

the position of VCs who are highly

respected world-wide? **Gopal Sengupta** Quebec, Canada

can be eased through barter process (after the bungling over the Jamunna Bridge). The new regime has to tie up the loose ends.

Dhaka

Hartal again?

Would the AL now like to announce publicly that they are reneging on their pre-election commitment not to call hartal?

M Ali, on e-mail

Gas export

Please, M Saifur Rahman, Finance and Planning Minister, think before taking any decision regarding gas export. Don't make us beggar, as once Khaleda Zia said. "We cannot sell our wealth and then become beggars.'

After 200 years people still remember Mir Zafar.

Tarun Bandarban

Gas reserve

I am referring to the Ekushey TV interview of Minister of Energy and Mineral resource on November, At the end of the interview the Minister told that reserve of gas would be augmented when it will be introverted.

Everybody knows that the mineral resources in the world are decreasing day by day due to its use. And the day will come soon when there may not be any mineral resources left.

That's why the western countries are keeping their reserve untouched

The victims of visa restrictions

On November 14, the US Secretary of State Colin Powell announced imposition of a package of visa restrictions on Muslim men from around 26 Arab and Muslim countries throughout the world. The countries are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The US State Department said that the visa restrictions, to be enforced immediately, covered male Muslims from these predominantly Muslim countries.

Under the new policy, described as a preventive measure by the State Department, male Muslims from the listed countries aged between 16 to 45 will have to wait for 20 days for their visa application to be processed. It is also reported that a special team comprising the FBI and CIA will scrutinise all visa applications from the listed countries before approval is granted by the embassies. The regulation would also require Muslim men to complete a detailed questionnaire on employment, military service and weapons training, past activities and activities of immediate and distant

We regret that the United States has targeted Muslims in its fight against terrorism by imposing visa restrictions on Muslim men. It looks like the focus against terrorism is on Muslims and Muslim nations. This is preposterous and unjust, as we know that even now there are many terrorists who are non-Muslims. And they are no less vicious. This only lends credence to charges that the war against terrorism is actually a camouflaged war against Islam.

Let's not forget that it was not a Muslim, but a white supremacist, who did carry out the Oklahoma bombing that claimed hundreds of innocent men and women. Immediately after the, both the Western media and authorities pointed their fingers at Muslim terrorists, only to be proven wrong with the arrest and subsequent conviction of McVeigh.

The policy makers in the most powerful political house in the world should think how Americans themselves would react if they were asked to fill in a form that questions them about their personal histories and activities of their distant relatives. And what if 'that form' has such a column like this: Have you, or any members of your family or your ancestors been involved in, or supported the effort to destabilise, overthrow, assassinate, foment social unrest, support coup d'etats and supply through covert operations arms to the Government of any of the above mentioned countries. We feel that the visa restrictions on Muslim men from so many countries are invariably in contra-

vention with internationally recognised human rights and universal justice. One wonders how a free country like the US that stands for global justice and human rights can display such disregard to those values. Such discriminatory visa restrictions will never help USA curtail international terrorism, rather will only heighten anti-American sentiment among the singled-out Muslim countries. By stereotyping and demonising more than a billion Muslims and accusing them of being potential terrorists, the United States has shown that its own approach to the problem of global terrorism is based on hysteria, ignorance and prejudice.

AFM Mohiuddin Gulshan, Dhaka

countries cannot establish RMG factories.

Hence cheap import of RMG by some developing countries looks like an attractive proposition. The marginal expansion of the export market would help the RMG factories now facing closure, and dispose off stock lots at discount and introductory rates. The implications are never discussed in the mass media, for reasons best known to the

We may open fair price garment shops in some Third World countries on trial basis, and evaluate the scheme after sometime.

Shortage of foreign exchange

One-stroke solution

Our coal reserves

It is strange to learn from media reports that 80 per cent of our requirement of coal is met from India via Sylhet (Tamabil?).

Our Barapukuria mine is vet to go

commercial. The piping of gas to the

northern zone is a slow and costly

we taking time to export this resource? Atiqur Rahman

and everybody are looking for

Motijheel, Dhaka

renewable energy like solar, bio-Round up the unauthorised vehicles gas, wind, hydraulic etc. My guesand drivers, and 50,000 vehicles tion to the experts is that which one (minimum) would disappear from is correct. Dhaka's roads. Then go for the If our reserve of gas really second phase on traffic control. increases by introverting it, why are

were designed by people who were

You easily assumed that those 244 passengers of American Airlines 587 were killed by terrorists of the so-called third world country. It shows how pre-conceived your

ance to opinions different than yours

was occupying your mind. Yes, the US has been helping people or countries in distress but please allow me to turn the table. When you buy your house or apartment at an affordable price, please remember those were built by some poor Mexican with very minimum wages. When you buy fruits or vegetables, those were picked by some of those undocumented workers, working in a deplorable condition compared to what is mandated in the US. The prices are affordable because the US can't

above.

Shehzad Hossain

New DOHS, Dhaka

afford to employ their own with such low wages. When your children go to college for higher education, please remember that they will definitely be taught science and engineering by teachers who did not benefit from your free education. Rather most of those teachers were educated to bachelor degree by the taxpayers of those third world countries. Each year you get tens of thousands of engineers, scientists for whom you did not spend a dime in their elementary, high school or college education. When you buy clothes at "Supporting Amerireasonable price remember these third world countries' workers made that. When you use modern technology to ease your day to day life, please remember, some of those

educated by the tax dollars of these saying: "Oops! I am indeed sorry!" poor countries.

what we stand for!"

How many Bandladeshis actually come back after completing their education?

You sure got your "Rambo" and "Commando" straight, and you're well tuned to Hollywood, just like all good Americans and even foreigners like me. But the "farmer-Joeturned-Gladiator-due-tocircumstances"- image that you portray, is little fudged between your sense of movies and reality. The world isn't such a bad place where people don't remember gestures of

generosity. It's just that other than you good "average Americans" there are "above average Americans" who do things that you probably are not aware of. For instance, the Stinger Missiles and all that other stuff that the Talibans use are not exactly made in Afghanistan or Taiwan. Being a Muslim, I know my religion and to what extent the Taliban differ from Islam. I sympathise with the Talibans as much as the Northen Alliance does. It's just that we don't want too many good guys getting killed while you guys kill the bad

guys. Just like in Hollywood. Ali Bhuiyan, on e-mail

can opinion" This is in response to the letter

"Supporting American Opinion" (November 12) by Mr Kawsar Khan. Mr. Kawsar Khan, let me start by

We stupid Bangladeshis did not realise that your adoptive country was the great equaliser and was on a divine mission to right all the wrongs and that the bombing in Afghanistan was the price the

really expect better from the rags to riches Bedouins can we, now? But is that not the truth that we are indeed miskeen (beggars)?

In the US you may have been spared at being told so in the face, but are you not a beggar too, forced to seek livelihood in a foreign country just like many Bangladeshis who work in the Middle Eastern coun-Was your voice there, protesting

against the Russian invasion of

Afghanistan and the atrocities of the Taliban? Or were you busy trying to obtain your "green card"? How do you feel that it is your tax dollars that are funding the Israeli occupation and paying for the bombs that are now being dropped on people who were on the verge of

famine in the first place and proba-

bly did not even know what the Twin

Towers were? Lately, the Times magazine has included Bangladesh in its list of countries with "suspected Al-Quaida" networks. So I am sure vou will be very happy to see a few bombs falling on Bangladesh the next time a few people go crazy in the name of Islam.

I suppose that having your letter

published in The Daily Star, you will

have official verification of your

support for the US. Therefore, in

accordance with your concluding

statement you will "have moved

ahead in life." Well, you are indeed

Mr. Mojammal Hossain Tokyo, Japan

* * *

Mr. Kawser Khan gives very superficial reasoning in his letter "Support-

another place. And precisely for that reason, people are condemning loss of

> reference to feeding Bangladeshi children by America and America being the largest humanitarian organisation in the world.

kill a single innocent person. the author's trade and foreign policy focus is! Can America afford to stop