

## Goodwill of an MP

I was very delighted to read a news item in the online Ittefaq on December 3. It was about Mr. M.A.H. Salem, who is a current Member of Parliament. As per the report, Mr. Salem visited his constituency and went to see places like business centre, markets, and other places where illegal activities occur. Mr. Salem then went to the police station and told them to arrest the extortionists. The police have made 17 arrests. It was really encouraging to read that Mr. Salem as a BNP MP pushed these 17 arrests where all these 17 terrorist leaders happened to be BNP supporter. I have never been to Bagerhat, but I think people of Bagerhat should be fortunate to have such an MP.

I felt overwhelmed by reading that Mr. Salem (MP) was taking serious initiative to control criminal acts in Bagerhat. In the report it said, Mr. Salem alone visited hot spots where illegal activities occurred, and recorded names of goons by interviewing the victims. Moreover, it showed sign that we still have hope to see change in our country. I wish all MPs would do the same what Mr. Salem is doing in Bagerhat. MPs have the power to bring changes to our lives in Bangladesh. I am waiting for that day when majority of our MPs will be honest, educated, and patriotic. When that happens, I am optimistic that our country would become the economic tiger of South Asia.

SK, on e-mail

## Law and order situation

Exactly how many recognised miscreants do we have in our country? And how many have run off to the neighbouring countries? If the miscreants are known figures, then surely the concerned authorities must have their names, photographs, addresses and the names of their parents. Why not have the photographs displayed on the mini screen and through the press media?

We have learnt that nearly fifteen hundred murderers, thieves, toll collectors, and miscreants have been arrested but many are still left to roam about and go on with their criminal activities. How many more are there?

Mujibul Haque  
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

## Own trap

Sheikh Hasina called President Sahabuddin Ahmed liar because of his speech at the opening session of the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Don't the ex-Prime Minister know the speech was written by BNP? It's BNP's speech, the President was nothing but a reader.

The Awami League in 1996 changed the procedure that the President's speech is to be approved by the cabinet. Now the Awami League has fallen into its own trap.

Shawkat Hossain  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

## Bloodshed continues

The letter "Just another view" (November 17) by Salimul Haque caught my attention. In one place he wrote, "Is it not possible that actually the Jews did this with a view to bury Palestinian and wipe out the Muslims from the USA?" He was referring to the 11<sup>th</sup> September incident in the USA. I want to inform Mr. Salimul Haque that there are a great number of people who share the same view because it seems impossible for Osama bin Laden to carry out such a plan without the CIA or FBI getting any inkling.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan continues to bleed and innocent people continue to die. And in Palestine, massacre of Palestinians by Israeli force goes unabated.

Is there no end to this bloodshed?

Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

## Unplanned urbanisation

## George Harrison and Bangladesh



## Muslim cleansing: Anti-American propaganda

I am a young American student who has been reading *The Daily Star* every day for the past couple of months. I have no "Middle Eastern" heritage, only an intense curiosity and love of the cultures of Islamic countries. I love reading the different perspectives *The Daily Star* presents, but the anti-American sentiment sometimes disturbs me. I am constantly amazed how often American policy and actions are misunderstood, misrepresented, or purposely distorted in the Muslim world.

"Muslim cleansing" is a perfect example. This is pure and simple anti-American propaganda with no truth behind it, written with the sole intent of spreading hatred and misunderstanding between our two regions of the world. Please understand the United States is not perfect, nor do we claim to be. I don't support every single thing my government does, and I have the power to say so freely and even do something about it.

I have heard many theories on the real reason for the war in Afghanistan: to get rid of the Taliban, to gain power in the Middle East, to finally be able to take action against Iraq and other American enemies, to get revenge for the September 11th attacks,

We, the common students of Dhaka University solicit to the authorities concerned not to reiterate this system.

Muktijuddhas had freed the country, sacrificing their valuable lives and times, they must not want to destroy it. The government should not also do the same because it would be disgraceful for the Muktijuddhas. In order to avoid controversy please help the freedom fighters in an honourable way without snatching away people's fundamental rights.

Zahir  
Jasim Uddin Hall, DU

## Hoodlums and brickbat

Even with the JCD central command in cold storage, the hoodlums, toll collectors, and terrorists are besmirching the name of BNP and the ruling coalition after its overwhelming return to power. This grim political oppression has peaked especially before the Eid just two weeks away.

The way the political vacuum after the changeover is being restored is not liked by the people and our bad politics is getting brickbats. The political parties in power



## Polythene

Recently our government is planning to ban polythene. The news media is also supporting them regarding this issue. Without taking any steps for workers and the owner's investment how can the government do this? In this sector 45000 workers are engaged and 150 crore taka has been invested. To avoid environmental hazards, a programme can be adopted. The government can set up wastage management teams who will collect dry poly-bags. After collection it will be given for recycling in form of raw material and give to the poly-bags producer for use.

By this many street boys will be employed. The recycle raw materials can be used in various sectors such as Ball Pen, Plastic Bucket and other items. The main thing is to create public awareness and here media can play a vital role. Finally if this industry is banned then it will have a serious effect on those who are already involved in this line. Many women are engaged in this sector who after the ban will be in dire straits.

Mir Moshfeq  
Dhaka

Awami League arranged special BCS for the children and foster-children of Muktijuddha, which according to the Constitution is harmful for peoples' fundamental rights. Because the Constitution provides equal rights to all of the citizens of the country without making any discrimination. Quota system is not mentioned there. It is seen that those who fled away India during the Liberation War, has become Muktijuddha.

have to stem the tide, otherwise it would be too late to last five years with comfort. The negative political culture has to be changed by the politicians themselves, and not by the outsiders. This cannot be done without political consensus, and with so much hate campaign in evidence. The politicians have more inside information on how things work inside the political domain; hence they cannot plead not guilty and claim they do not

understand what is going on.

Since the British left this region, things have not returned to normal in this part of the world since the 1947 partition. The politicians have to work overtime to neutralise the frustration of the masses.

Abd  
Dhaka

## Some queries

The present Finance Minister Saifur Rahman said in the Parliament that "If jute and tea could be exported then why not gas if it is profitable".

So far we know tea and jute are grown on our fertile land and every year our farmers grow them in abundance. Can Mr Saifur Rahman grow gas in our land so that our reserve never ends?

A couple of weeks earlier one of the BNP lawmakers said "Import of electricity from India by exporting gas would be cheaper for growth of our industries. My question is why then India is interested to import our costly gas instead of using their own cheap electricity?"

The above questions are being asked by most common and not by high profile politicians of our country. I wonder why!

Shafiqul Islam  
Fulbaria, Savar, Dhaka

## Don't export gas

Gas is our one of the most valuable mineral resources. Most of our industries depend on gas. Is it essential for us to export gas only because we have it in plenty?

If we think thickly we can get 100 times more benefit than to export it by establishing industries in our own land. We can create another market like Europe or the Middle East where we can export our garments product. I request the new government to think and rethink about this sensitive and serious matter-- gas export.

AZM Abdullah  
CA student, Dhaka

Finally! After having suffered through the chest-beatings of people armed with little knowledge but a lot of zeal, lucid arguments regarding the gas export issue from M. M. Haque (November 30).

We are indulging in bashing America and American energy companies on the one hand and asking for "concessions" with the other. Stop and think of today's global economic realities - worldwide recession, economies in the doldrums, our dwindling foreign remittance and aid situation, not to mention the economic fallout of the September 11 attacks. While they divert their resources to the ongoing war against terror, how can we assume to be the continued recipients of American largesse for free, when clearly their priorities are elsewhere?

Economic reality dictates that we should be giving gas export serious consideration if we are to progress in the future. To echo the opinion of the Hon'ble Finance Minister, gas is a useless resource while it's under the ground. We should be planning for the future, focusing on how to develop alternative industries, infrastructure and human resources with the income generated from gas sales.

What is most ironic is how worked up we become about "sell-

and finally, as Mr. Binyameen put it, "wipe out the Muslim community." This last theory blows my mind. I'll tell you the true reason for this war as I, a young American, see it. This is a war to bring those responsible for terrorism across the world to justice and to liberate the innocent people of Afghanistan who have been unbelievably mistreated by the Taliban. By bettering the situation in Afghanistan (and 'not' by replacing the Taliban with the Northern Alliance), peace in the Middle East may be one step closer to reality.

Call me naive or idealistic, but this is the same thinking of 99 per cent of the Americans I know. Muslim cleansing? Please! Many American citizens are Muslims (and are 'not' being arrested and detained because of their religion or ethnicity!). I have friends who are Muslim! I beg you as Muslim citizens all across the world to keep an open mind and not let hatred blind you. God bless.

A member of the next generation of US citizens  
USA

ing off our resources", but are resigned to our incredibly inefficient state industries which wastes the same with impunity, and to the staggering system losses both in gas and power distribution. The loss itself amounts to several thousand crores to date, and the energy "lost" so far could probably have powered current industry levels for another decade! Where are the another decade! Where are the another decade! Where are the another decade! Where are the another decade!

Sadat Omar  
Old DOHS, Dhaka

## Competent ambassador needed

We the Bangladeshi and American Bangladeshi citizens demand that our next ambassador be a qualified, experienced and active person. His experience should include good knowledge of the US Constitution and how the US congress works.

Some ambassadors were not familiar with the congress and if the ambassador is not a politician or public representative he/she cannot easily connect or correlate with congressman/woman (as they are all public representatives). The ambassador should be also familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of United Nations and how far Bangladesh is lagging behind in those rights, he/she should not be too much defensive or diplomatic but factual. He/she and his/her spouse should be social to mix with Bangladeshi and American Bangladeshi citizen. Career diplomat of bureaucrat may not be effective ambassador for the US. After September 11 a lot of things have changed here.

Dr. Golam F Akhter  
Convener, Bangladesh-US Human Rights Coalition  
Adjunct Professor, Howard University, Washington, DC, US

## Is Islam an Arab religion?

I have thoroughly enjoyed the article "The case of a poor Asian Bangladeshi Muslim" (November 27). In this connection I would like to state two historical facts to strengthen the contention of Mr Afsan Chowdhury that Islam is an Arab religion.

According to four schools of thought belonging to Sunni sect the caliph was to be from the family of the Quraish. As such the Quraish descendants had ruled in Media, Damascus and Baghdad. Secondly, caliph Omar passed a decree barring the Arabs to be made slaves i.e. slaves were to be from the non-Arabs.

Ahmed Shah  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Cricket and the ICC

The Mike Dennes cricket controversy has two aspects that need to be addressed.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is insisting that the Match Referee be empowered to take action on his own even if the field umpires see no cause for action. Why should the field umpires be reduced to non-entities? They are the ones who conduct the game for its entire duration. They may not

can never be replaced.

Manzur Khan Masum  
Houston, Texas, USA

George Harrison will always be remembered by people who knew him as a great musician, a mystic, a humanitarian and overall a person with a very different personality. Indeed he was a true world citizen.

Knowing his contribution towards our country with the legendary fund-raising concert "Concert for Bangladesh" a true Bangladeshi would feel pity towards his own country for not being able to give him proper recognition even after 30 years of its existence.

True that by honouring George Harrison and inviting him to the nation's 25<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary celebration, we would have received neither more economic aid from the west nor our leadership would have been honoured by an award or honorary doctorate. But what we could have shown to the civilised world is that Bangladesh knew how to recognise its true friend and that we are not ungrateful.

Abid Reza  
Dhaka

Muralitharan of Sri Lanka, now Tendulkar of India.

But we hear nothing about the white players. They seem to be perfect. No matter how much loud their appeal is nothing seems wrong to the umpires. The Australians are notorious for their on-field behaviour, particularly, Glen McGrath and Shane Warne. But they get away with it!

Justice should be meted out by a collective body and not by an individual, particularly when his action is likely to benefit his countrymen.

Abul Mohsin  
Siddheswari, Dhaka

## "Mineral resources"

Mr. Lutfur Rahman's letter (November 25) under the above caption seems to have gone unnoticed by many and especially the authorities concerned. In this regard "Lubhdoks" detailed report in the sub-edition of Ittefaq (November 20) gives a clear picture how negligent we are about our national wealth.

The whole country would join Mr. Rahman to know under what terms and conditions, the Australian firm has been allowed to explore and collect valuable minerals known as "Black Gold".

We should be aware of KAFCO deal, which has become burden for

## Air pollution



I am pleased to know that the government is taking proper initiative to fight Dhaka city's air pollution. It is about time we solved this menacing problem. We cannot hope to solve it overnight, but we hope to overcome it soon, rather than never.

However, such drives shouldn't just bring easy money to the traffic sergeants, who do nothing but check for proper papers and documents rather than easing the traffic jam. The authority for checking relevant papers and licence should be shifted to another department. I was stopped by the same traffic sergeant twice this year near Manik Mia Avenue for trifling reasons. I was told that I had violated the traffic signal.

The cars on the opposite side were still waiting near their respective signal posts. What do you do in a situation like this? You go with the flow of the traffic. I have been outside the country for a number of times, but haven't yet seen traffic police and sergeants stopping cars unnecessarily, but doing their job, which is ensuring smooth flow of traffic. Not checking papers, or waiting to catch a prey.

In plain and simple english, the policemen in our country abuse their posts and add misery, instead of being of any help to the traffic situation. Most of them are basically redundant from a road users's perspective. Their existence only benefits their community.

Let us hope the present government will resolve such problems.

A Concerned Bangladeshi  
Dhaka

They have no right to be dogmatic about it. People in many countries have waged long struggles to get rid of dictatorship in their countries but it would be sadly ironical if dictatorship crawls back into sports bodies!

The other aspect of the matter is the lack of fairness and consistency in decision making. In the same Test match we saw South African captain Shaun Pollock himself making prolonged appeals for lbw decision several times and Hayward glaring and muttering something (obviously not pleasant!) to the Indian batsmen. But no action was taken against them. This discriminatory attitude of the Match Referee is another cause for asking his replacement.

If we look at the players against whom action had been taken in the past we find that most of them were non-whites. They seem to particularly pick on match winning players, like, Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Shoab Akhtar of Pakistan, Bangladesh and we should not repeat such criminal damage to the country's wealth. A special taskforce should be created under a corporation with special powers to deal with specific projects like *MithaPukur* for coal, hard rock at Barapukuria and minerals of Cox's Bazar.

It is hoped that such issues would receive attention of all concerned and our press as usual would do their best to protect our national interest.

Rumi Ahmed  
Little Jewels School, Chittagong

## "GD against the PM..."

Allow me to point out that Rahmat Ali MP, being an advocate took a legal step when 'his sensibilities were hurt'. With lesser provocation we find politicians and their followers embarking on city streets halting traffic and damaging vehicles and other public properties.

In your above editorial are you suggesting that Advocate Rahmat Ali should have adopted conventional political behaviour. But then you seem to disapprove the conventional reaction that erupted after Rahmat Ali's action. Would you have advised the aggrieved parties here to sue the advocate?

Another point is if a citizen feels to be the victim of wrong doing by someone at high place is he not entitled to approach a law-enforcing entity?

MAH  
Dhaka

## Car is a mode of transportation

Sheikh Hasina needs to grow up and realise that she is making a complete fool of herself. She needs to be satisfied with the car that is provided to her by the government or she can use a rickshaw, scooter, AC bus or a tempo.

Most Bangladeshis can't afford a car and it is indeed ridiculous that the daughter of such a great leader

is complaining about such a petty issue.

A Bangladeshi taxpayer  
USA

In light of Hasina's petulance at losing her bullet proof Mercedes, someone should remind her of the marquis history with her ilk.

The Shah of Iran, Idi Amin of Uganda and Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania all also lost their bullet proof Mercedes.

See a trend?

MA, on e-mail

## Protect democracy

It is a feeling of sadness and hopelessness for the people of Bangladesh who have been unable to elect politicians as heads of state during the period of thirty years as an independent state. Some incompetent leaders have been at the helm of affairs and it seems that they are unable to govern the democratically. How long will the people suffer at the hands of these so-called politicians who are out to play politics as a pastime.

The Bengalis must now open their eyes and hearts and collectively strive to protect their rights by electing honest, educated and experienced politicians who would serve the nation instead of acting as *jaigirdars*.

Fahim Pasha  
Washington, USA

## We don't support bloodshed

It is not clear to me how far Mr. Theodor B. Goschal know about the number of nations that tortured and looted the subcontinent including the then East Bengal, but as far as I remember, the Europeans are not excluded from the list. In fact, including the Dutch, the British and finally the military junta of the then Pakistan, left a wound that probably won't heal.

The people of Bangladesh are therefore naturally against torturing, killing and illegal occupation of foreign land. It is quite understandable that Theodor became angry at the sight of the support for Bin Laden at a procession. Actually what you have seen as support for Bin Laden, it was much more against the mass killing.

It's not the Bangladeshis who are to blame but the US which made Bin Laden a hero and according to Prof. Chomsky will help Bin Laden to be given a martyrdom which is also true. In fact, the Ladens are business partners of US President Bushes and might be a family friend who knows!

The US and its pet followers (like Mr. Theodor!) did not yet reply any satisfactory answer to some basic questions.

\* Why didn't US not submit the proof of Laden's involvement, which it claims it has, to the international community?

\* What is the need of a huge useless organisations like the UNO?

\* Who gave the US the license to slaughter thousands of innocent Afghans?

\* Why don't the west prescribe democracy for Saudi Arabia and other similar monarchies?

\* What about the Zionist terrorists does terrorism have any colour?

Probably it is yet another New World Order to comply with US even though it might be wrong.

M.U. Chowdhury, on e-mail

## Human languages endangered

The world's six billion inhabitants speak about 6,800 languages. But more than half of these have fewer than 2,500 speakers and a native tongue dies out every two weeks on the average. Ms. Payal Sampat, a researcher at the Worldwatch Institute, USA, has said that we could lose up to 90 percent of our linguistic diversity in the next few hundred years. She says that it would be a huge loss, because languages provide clues to human history.

Most endangered tongues are in biologically rich locations, and they hold a wealth of information about places like tropical rainforests.

Governments can slow the trend with policies that encourage people to be multilingual. For example, Hawaii now has high schools where students learn in English and native Hawaiian, which has been banned from the classroom. Norway passed a new Endangered Languages Act to protect Lapland tongues. These policies can strike a balance between cultural tradition and the modern world.

The world has already lost more than half of its languages, and many more will not survive the next century. But government policies can help save many endangered languages, along with the history and knowledge they contain.

M. A. Obaydullah  
Banani, Dhaka